Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/worksofdugaldste0007vari

THE

WORKS

OF

DUGALD STEWART.

1753-1828.

IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

VOL. VII.

CAMBRIDGE:
PUBLISHED BY HILLIARD AND BROWN.
1829.

192
S849A
vol. 7

CAMBRIDGE:
E. W. METCALF AND COMPANY,
Printers to the University.

NEW THEOLOGICAL

CONTENTS.

Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL. D.

SECTION I.

From Mr. Smith's Birth till the Publication of The Theory of Moral Sentiments - - - - - - - - - - 3

SECTION II.

Of The Theory of Moral Sentiments, and the Dissertation on the Origin of Languages - - - - - - - - 12

SECTION III.

From the Publication of The Theory of Moral Sentiments, till that of The Wealth of Nations - - - - - - - 38

SECTION IV.

Of the Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations - - - - - - - - - - - - 49

SECTION V.

Conclusion of the Narrative - - - - - - - 67

Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson, D. D.

Advertisement - - - - - - - - - - 79

SECTION I.

From Dr. Robertson's Birth till the Publication of his History of Scotland - - - - - - - - - - - 81

SECTION II.

Progress of Dr. Robertson's literary Plans and Undertakings—History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles the Fifth - 116

7820

SECTION III.

Continuation of the same Subject—History of America - - 139

SECTION IV.

Continuation of the same Subject—Historical Disquisition concerning India—General Remarks on Dr. Robertson's Merits as an Historian - - - - - - - - 154

SECTION V.

Review of the more active Occupations of Dr. Robertson's Life—Conclusion of the Narrative—Sketch of his Character - 173

Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid, D. D. F. R. S.

SECTION I.

From Dr. Reid's Birth till the Date of his Latest Publication - 207

SECTION II.

Observations on the Spirit and Scope of Dr. Reid's Philosophy 228

SECTION III.

Conclusion of the Narrative - - - - - - - - 271

Notes - - - - - - - - - - - 287

Tracts respecting the Election of Mr. Leslie to the Professorship of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh.

A Short Statement of Some Important Facts relative to the late Election of a Mathematical Professor in the University of Edinburgh; accompanied with Original Papers and Critical Remarks - - - - - - - - - - 293

Appendix - - - - - - - - - - 351
No. I. - - - - - - - - - 351
No. II. - - - - - - - - - 358
No. III. - - - - - - - - - 363
No. IV. - - - - - - - - - 365

Postscript to Mr. Stewart's Short Statement of Facts relative to the Election of Professor Leslie - - - - - - 375

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

ADAM SMITH, LL. D.

FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH.

[Read by Mr. Stewart, January 21, and March 18, 1793.]

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

ADAM SMITH, LL. D.

SECTION I.

From Mr. Smith's Birth till the Publication of the Theory of Moral Sentiments.

Adam Smith, Author of the Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, was the son of Adam Smith, Comptroller of the Customs at Kirkaldy,* and of Margaret Douglas, daughter of Mr. Douglas of Strathenry. He was the only child of the marriage, and was born at Kirkaldy on the 5th of June, 1723, a few months after the death of his father.

His constitution during infancy was infirm and sickly, and required all the tender solicitude of his surviving parent. She was blamed for treating him with an unlimited indulgence; but it produced no unfavorable effects on his temper or his dispositions:—and he enjoyed the rare satisfaction of being able to repay her affection, by every attention that filial gratitude could dictate, during the long period of sixty years.

* Mr. Smith, the father, was a native of Aberdeenshire, and in the earlier part of his life practised at Edinburgh as a writer to the Signet. He was afterwards private secretary to the Earl of Loudoun, (during the time that he held the offices of principal Secretary of State for Scotland, and of Keeper of the Great Seal,) and continued in this situation till 1713 or 1714, when he was appointed comptroller of the customs at Kirkaldy. He was also clerk to the courts martial and councils of war for Scotland; an office which he held from 1707 till his death. As it is now seventy years since he died, the accounts I have received of him are very imperfect; but from the particulars already mentioned, it may be presumed, that he was a man of more than common abilities.

An accident which happened to him when he was about three years old, is of too interesting a nature to be omitted in the account of so valuable a life. He had been carried by his mother to Strathenry on a visit to his uncle Mr. Douglas, and was one day amusing himself alone at the door of the house, when he was stolen by a party of that set of vagrants, who are known in Scotland by the name of Tinkers. Luckily he was soon missed by his uncle, who hearing that some vagrants had passed, pursued them, with what assistance he could find, till he overtook them in Leslie wood; and was the happy instrument of preserving to the world a genius, which was destined, not only to extend the boundaries of science, but to enlighten and reform the commercial policy of Europe.

The school of Kirkaldy, where Mr. Smith received the first rudiments of his education, was then taught by Mr. David Miller, a teacher, in his day, of considerable reputation, and whose name deserves to be recorded, on account of the eminent men whom that very obscure seminary produced while under his direction. Of this number were Mr. Oswald of Dunikeir; his brother, Dr. John Oswald, afterwards Bishop of Raphoe; and our late excellent colleague, the Reverend Dr. John Drysdale: all of them nearly contemporary with Mr. Smith, and united with him through life by the closest ties of friendship.—One of his school-fellows is still alive;* and to his kindness I am principally indebted for the scanty materials which form the first part of this narrative.

Among these companions of his earliest years, Mr. Smith soon attracted notice, by his passion for books, and by the extraordinary powers of his memory. The weakness of his bodily constitution prevented him from partaking in their more active amusements; but he was much beloved by them on account of his temper, which, though warm, was to an uncommon degree friendly and generous. Even then he was remarkable for those habits which remained with him through life, of speaking to himself when alone, and of *absence* in company.

* George Drysdale, Esq. of Kirkaldy, brother of the late Dr. Drysdale.

From the grammar-school of Kirkaldy, he was sent, in 1737, to the University of Glasgow, where he remained till 1740, when he went to Balliol College, Oxford, as an exhibitioner on Snell's foundation.

Dr. Maclaine of the Hague, who was a fellow-student of Mr. Smith's at Glasgow, told me some years ago, that his favorite pursuits while at that University were Mathematics and Natural Philosophy; and I remember to have heard my father remind him of a geometrical problem of considerable difficulty, about which he was occupied at the time when their acquaintance commenced, and which had been proposed to him as an exercise, by the celebrated Dr. Simpson.

These, however, were certainly not the sciences in which he was formed to excel; nor did they long divert him from pursuits more congenial to his mind. What Lord Bacon says of Plato may be justly applied to him: "Illum, licet ad rempublicam non accessisset, tamen naturâ et inclinatione omnino ad res civiles propensum, vires eo præcipue intendisse; neque de Philosophia Naturali admodum sollicitum esse; nisi quatenus ad Philosophi nomen et celebritatem tuendam, et ad majestatem quandam moralibus et civilibus doctrinis addendam et aspergendam sufficeret." * The study of human nature in all its branches, more particularly of the political history of mankind, opened a boundless field to his curiosity and ambition; and while it afforded scope to all the various powers of his versatile and comprehensive genius, gratified his ruling passion, of contributing to the happiness and the improvement of society. To this study, diversified at his leisure hours by the less severe occupations of polite literature, he seems to have devoted himself almost entirely from the time of his removal to Oxford; but he still retained, and retained even in advanced years, a recollection of his early acquisitions, which not only added to the splendor of his conversation, but enabled him to exemplify some of his favorite theories concerning the natural progress of the mind in the investigation of truth, by the history of those sciences in which the connexion and succession

* Redargutio Philosophiarum.

of discoveries may be traced with the greatest advantage. If I am not mistaken too, the influence of his early taste for the Greek geometry may be remarked in the elementary clearness and fulness, bordering sometimes upon prolixity, with which he frequently states his political reasonings.—The lectures of the profound and eloquent Dr. Hutcheson, which he had attended previous to his departure from Glasgow, and of which he always spoke in terms of the warmest admiration, had, it may be reasonably presumed, a considerable effect in directing his talents to their proper objects.

I have not been able to collect any information with respect to that part of his youth which was spent in England. I have heard him say, that he employed himself frequently in the practice of translation, (particularly from the French,) with a view to the improvement of his own style: and he used often to express a favorable opinion of the utility of such exercises, to all who cultivate the art of composition. It is much to be regretted, that none of his juvenile attempts in this way have been preserved; as the few specimens which his writings contain of his skill as a translator, are sufficient to show the eminence he had attained in a walk of literature, which, in our country, has been so little frequented by men of genius.

It was probably also at this period of his life, that he cultivated with the greatest care the study of languages. The knowledge he possessed of these, both ancient and modern, was uncommonly extensive and accurate; and, in him, was subservient, not to a vain parade of tasteless erudition, but to a familiar acquaintance with every thing that could illustrate the institutions, the manners, and the ideas of different ages and nations. How intimately he had once been conversant with the more ornamental branches of learning; in particular, with the works of the Roman, Greek, French, and Italian poets, appeared sufficiently from the hold which they kept of his memory, after all the different occupations and inquiries in which his maturer faculties had been employed.* In the English language,

* The uncommon degree in which Mr. Smith retained possession, even to the

the variety of poetical passages which he was not only accustomed to refer to occasionally, but which he was able to repeat with correctness, appeared surprising even to those, whose attention had never been directed to more important acquisitions.

After a residence at Oxford of seven years, he returned to Kirkaldy, and lived two years with his mother; engaged in study, but without any fixed plan for his future life. He had been originally destined for the Church of England, and with that view had been sent to Oxford; but not finding the ecclesiastical profession suitable to his taste, he chose to consult, in this instance, his own inclination, in preference to the wishes of his friends; and abandoning at once all the schemes which their prudence had formed for him, he resolved to return to his own country, and to limit his ambition to the uncertain prospect of obtaining, in time, some one of those moderate preferments, to which literary attainments lead in Scotland.

In the year 1748, he fixed his residence at Edinburgh, and during that and the following years, read lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres, under the patronage of Lord Kames. About this time, too, he contracted a very intimate friendship, which continued without interruption till his death, with Mr. Alexander Wedderburn, now Lord Loughborough, and with Mr. William Johnstone, now Mr. Pulteney.

At what particular period his acquaintance with Mr. David Hume commenced, does not appear from any information that I have received; but from some papers, now in the possession of Mr. Hume's nephew, and which he has been so obliging as to allow me to peruse, their acquaintance seems to have grown into friendship before the year 1752. It was a friendship on both sides founded on the admiration of genius, and the love of simplicity; and which forms an interesting circumstance

---

close of his life, of different branches of knowledge which he had long ceased to cultivate, has been often remarked to me by my learned colleague and friend, Mr. Dalzel, Professor of Greek in this University.—Mr. Dalzel mentioned particularly the readiness and correctness of Mr. Smith's memory on philological subjects, and the acuteness and skill he displayed in various conversations with him on some of the *minutiæ* of Greek grammar.

in the history of each of these eminent men, from the ambition which both have shown to record it to posterity.

In 1751, he was elected Professor of Logic in the University of Glasgow; and, the year following, he was removed to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in the same University, upon the death of Mr. Thomas Craigie, the immediate successor of Dr. Hutcheson. In this situation, he remained thirteen years; a period he used frequently to look back to, as the most useful and happy of his life. It was indeed a situation in which he was eminently fitted to excel, and in which the daily labors of his profession were constantly recalling his attention to his favorite pursuits, and familiarizing his mind to those important speculations he was afterwards to communicate to the world. In this view, though it afforded, in the mean time, but a very narrow scene for his ambition, it was probably instrumental, in no inconsiderable degree, to the future eminence of his literary character.

Of Mr. Smith's lectures while a Professor at Glasgow, no part has been preserved, excepting what he himself published in the Theory of Moral Sentiments and in the Wealth of Nations. The Society therefore, I am persuaded, will listen with pleasure to the following short account of them, for which I am indebted to a gentleman who was formerly one of Mr. Smith's pupils, and who continued till his death to be one of his most intimate and valued friends.

"In the Professorship of Logic, to which Mr. Smith was appointed on his first introduction into this University, he soon saw the necessity of departing widely from the plan that had been followed by his predecessors, and of directing the attention of his pupils to studies of a more interesting and useful nature than the logic and metaphysics of the schools. Accordingly, after exhibiting a general view of the powers of the mind, and explaining so much of the ancient logic as was requisite to gratify curiosity with respect to an artificial method of reasoning, which had once occupied the universal attention of the learned, he dedicated all the rest

of his time to the delivery of a system of rhetoric and belles lettres. The best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind, the most useful part of metaphysics, arises from an examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by speech, and from an attention to the principles of those literary compositions which contribute to persuasion or entertainment. By these arts, every thing that we perceive or feel, every operation of our minds, is expressed and delineated in such a manner, that it may be clearly distinguished and remembered. There is, at the same time, no branch of literature more suited to youth at their first entrance upon philosophy than this, which lays hold of their taste and their feelings.

"It is much to be regretted, that the manuscript containing Mr. Smith's lectures on this subject was destroyed before his death. The first part, in point of composition, was highly finished; and the whole discovered strong marks of taste and original genius. From the permission given to students of taking notes, many observations and opinions contained in these lectures have either been detailed in separate dissertations, or engrossed in general collections, which have since been given to the public. But these, as might be expected, have lost the air of originality and the distinctive character which they received from their first author, and are often obscured by that multiplicity of common-place matter in which they are sunk and involved.

"About a year after his appointment to the Professorship of Logic, Mr. Smith was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy. His course of lectures on this subject was divided into four parts. The first contained Natural Theology; in which he considered the proofs of the being and attributes of God, and those principles of the human mind upon which religion is founded. The second comprehended Ethics strictly so called, and consisted chiefly of the doctrines which he afterwards published in his Theory of Moral Sentiments. In the third part, he treated at more length of that branch of morality which relates to *justice*, and which, being sus-

ceptible of precise and accurate rules, is for that reason capable of a full and particular explanation.

"Upon this subject he followed the plan that seems to be suggested by Montesquieu; endeavouring to trace the gradual progress of jurisprudence, both public and private, from the rudest to the most refined ages, and to point out the effects of those arts which contribute to subsistence, and to the accumulation of property, in producing correspondent improvements or alterations in law and government. This important branch of his labors he also intended to give to the public; but this intention, which is mentioned in the conclusion of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, he did not live to fulfil.

"In the last part of his lectures, he examined those political regulations which are founded, not upon the principle of *justice*, but that of *expediency*, and which are calculated to increase the riches, the power, and the prosperity of a State. Under this view, he considered the political institutions relating to commerce, to finances, to ecclesiastical and military establishments. What he delivered on these subjects contained the substance of the work he afterwards published under the title of An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.

"There was no situation in which the abilities of Mr. Smith appeared to greater advantage than as a Professor. In delivering his lectures, he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner, though not graceful, was plain and unaffected; and as he seemed to be always interested in the subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted commonly of several distinct propositions, which he successively endeavoured to prove and illustrate. These propositions, when announced in general terms, had, from their extent, not unfrequently something of the air of a paradox. In his attempts to explain them, he often appeared, at first, not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with some hesitation. As he advanced, however, the matter seemed to crowd upon him, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent. In points susceptible of

controversy, you could easily discern, that he secretly conceived an opposition to his opinions, and that he was led upon this account to support them with greater energy and vehemence. By the fulness and variety of his illustrations, the subject gradually swelled in his hands, and acquired a dimension which, without a tedious repetition of the same views, was calculated to seize the attention of his audience, and to afford them pleasure, as well as instruction, in following the same object, through all the diversity of shades and aspects in which it was presented, and afterwards in tracing it backwards to that original proposition or general truth, from which this beautiful train of speculation had proceeded.

"His reputation as a professor was accordingly raised very high, and a multitude of students from a great distance resorted to the University, merely upon his account. Those branches of science which he taught became fashionable at this place, and his opinions were the chief topics of discussion in clubs and literary societies. Even the small peculiarities in his pronunciation or manner of speaking, became frequently the objects of imitation."

While Mr. Smith was thus distinguishing himself by his zeal and ability as a public teacher, he was gradually laying the foundation of a more extensive reputation, by preparing for the press his system of morals. The first edition of this work appeared in 1759, under the title of "The Theory of Moral Sentiments."

Hitherto Mr. Smith had remained unknown to the world as an author; nor have I heard that he had made a trial of his powers in any anonymous publications, excepting in a periodical work called *The Edinburgh Review*, which was begun in the year 1755, by some gentlemen of distinguished abilities, but which they were prevented by other engagements from carrying farther than the two first numbers. To this work Mr. Smith contributed a review of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language, and also a letter, addressed to the editors, containing some general observations on the state of literature in the different countries of Eu-

rope. In the former of these papers, he points out some defects in Dr. Johnson's plan, which he censures as not sufficiently grammatical. "The different significations of a word," he observes, "are indeed collected; but they are seldom digested into general classes, or ranged under the meaning which the word principally expresses: And sufficient care is not taken to distinguish the words apparently synonymous." To illustrate this criticism, he copies from Dr. Johnson the articles *but* and *humour*, and opposes to them the same articles digested agreeably to his own idea. The various significations of the word *but* are very nicely and happily discriminated. The other article does not seem to have been executed with equal care.

The observations on the state of learning in Europe are written with ingenuity and elegance; but are chiefly interesting, as they show the attention which the author had given to the philosophy and literature of the Continent, at a period when they were not much studied in this island.

In the same volume with the Theory of Moral Sentiments, Mr. Smith published a Dissertation "on the Origin of Languages, and on the different Genius of those which are original and compounded." The remarks I have to offer on these two discourses, I shall, for the sake of distinctness, make the subject of a separate section.

SECTION II.

Of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, and the Dissertation on the Origin of Languages.

The science of Ethics has been divided by modern writers into two parts; the one comprehending the theory of Morals, and the other its practical doctrines. The questions about which the former is employed, are chiefly the two following: 1. By what principle of our constitution are we led to form the notion of moral dis-

tinctions;—whether by that faculty which perceives the distinction between truth and falsehood; or by a peculiar power of perception, which is *pleased* with one set of qualities, and *displeased* with another? 2. What is the proper object of moral approbation; or, in other words, What is the common quality or qualities belonging to all the different modes of virtue? Is it benevolence; or a rational self-love; or a disposition to act suitably to the different relations in which we are placed? These two questions seem to exhaust the whole theory of Morals. The scope of the one is to ascertain the origin of our moral ideas; that of the other, to refer the phenomena of moral perception to their most simple and general laws.

The practical doctrines of morality comprehend all those rules of conduct which profess to point out the proper ends of human pursuit, and the most effectual means of attaining them; to which we may add all those literary compositions, whatever be their particular form, which have for their aim to fortify and animate our good dispositions, by delineations of the beauty, of the dignity, or of the utility of Virtue.

I shall not inquire at present into the justness of this division. I shall only observe, that the words *theory* and *practice* are not, in this instance, employed in their usual acceptations. The theory of Morals does not bear, for example, the same relation to the practice of Morals, that the theory of geometry bears to practical geometry. In this last science, all the practical rules are founded on theoretical principles previously established: But in the former science, the practical rules are obvious to the capacities of all mankind; the theoretical principles form one of the most difficult subjects of discussion that have ever exercised the ingenuity of metaphysicians.

In illustrating the doctrines of practical morality, (if we make allowance for some unfortunate prejudices produced or encouraged by violent and oppressive systems of policy,) the ancients seem to have availed themselves of every light furnished by nature to human reason; and indeed those writers who, in later times, have treated the subject with the greatest success, are

they who have followed most closely the footsteps of the Greek and the Roman philosophers. The theoretical question, too, concerning the essence of virtue, or the proper *object* of moral approbation, was a favorite topic of discussion in the ancient schools. The question concerning the *principle* of moral approbation, though not entirely of modern origin, has been chiefly agitated since the writings of Dr. Cudworth, in opposition to those of Mr. Hobbes; and it is this question accordingly, (recommended at once by its novelty and difficulty to the curiosity of speculative men,) that has produced most of the theories which characterize and distinguish from each other the later systems of moral philosophy.

It was the opinion of Dr. Cudworth, and also of Dr. Clarke, that moral distinctions are perceived by that power of the mind which distinguishes truth from falsehood. This system it was one great object of Dr. Hutcheson's philosophy to refute, and in opposition to it, to show that the words *right* and *wrong* express certain agreeable and disagreeable qualities in actions, which it is not the province of reason but of feeling to perceive; and to that power of perception which renders us susceptible of pleasure or of pain from the view of virtue or of vice, he gave the name of the Moral Sense. His reasonings upon this subject are in the main acquiesced in, both by Mr. Hume and Mr. Smith; but they differ from him in one important particular,—Dr. Hutcheson plainly supposing, that the moral sense is a simple principle of our constitution, of which no account can be given; whereas the other two philosophers have both attempted to analyze it into other principles more general. Their systems, however, with respect to it are very different from each other. According to Mr. Hume, all the qualities which are denominated virtuous, are useful either to ourselves or to others, and the pleasure which we derive from a view of them is the pleasure of utility. Mr. Smith, without rejecting entirely Mr. Hume's doctrine, proposes another of his own, far more comprehensive; a doctrine with which he thinks all the most celebrated theo-

ries of morality invented by his predecessors coincide in part, and from some partial view of which he apprehends that they have all proceeded.

Of this very ingenious and original theory, I shall endeavour to give a short abstract. To those who are familiarly acquainted with it as it is stated by its author, I am aware that the attempt may appear superfluous; but I flatter myself that it will not be wholly useless to such as have not been much conversant in these abstract disquisitions, by presenting to them the leading principles of the system in one connected view, without those interruptions of the attention which necessarily arise from the author's various and happy illustrations, and from the many eloquent digressions which animate and adorn his composition.

The fundamental principle of Mr. Smith's theory is, that the primary objects of our moral perceptions are the actions of other men; and that our moral judgments with respect to our own conduct are only applications to ourselves of decisions which we have already passed on the conduct of our neighbour. His work accordingly consists of two parts. In the former, he explains in what manner we learn to judge of the conduct of our neighbour; in the latter, in what manner, by applying these judgments to ourselves, we acquire *a sense of duty.*

Our moral judgments both with respect to our own conduct and that of others, include two distinct perceptions: 1. A perception of conduct as right or wrong: and 2. A perception of the merit or demerit of the agent. To that quality of conduct which moralists, in general, express by the word *rectitude*, Mr. Smith gives the name of *propriety;* and he begins his theory with inquiring in what it consists, and how we are led to form the idea of it. The leading principles of his doctrine on this subject are comprehended in the following propositions:

1. It is from our own experience alone, that we can form any idea of what passes in the mind of another person on any particular occasion; and the only way in which we can form this idea, is by supposing ourselves in the same circumstances with him, and conceiving how

we should be affected if we were so situated. It is impossible for us, however, to conceive ourselves placed in any situation, whether agreeable or otherwise, without feeling an effect of the same kind with what would be produced by the situation itself; and of consequence the attention we give at any time to the circumstances of our neighbour, must affect us somewhat in the same manner, although by no means in the same degree, as if these circumstances were our own.

That this imaginary change of place with other men, is the real source of the interest we take in their fortunes, Mr. Smith attempts to prove by various instances. "When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer. The mob when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation." The same thing takes place, according to Mr. Smith, in every case in which our attention is turned to the condition of our neighbour. "Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. In every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible, the emotions of the by-stander always correspond to what, by bringing the case home to himself, he imagines should be the sentiments of the sufferer."

To this principle of our nature which leads us to enter into the situations of other men, and to partake with them in the passions which these situations have a tendency to excite, Mr. Smith gives the name of *sympathy* or *fellow-feeling*, which two words he employs as synonymous. Upon some occasions, he acknowledges, that sympathy arises merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person; but in general it arises, not so much from the view of the emotion, as from that of the situation which excites it.

2. A sympathy or fellow-feeling between different persons is always agreeable to both. When I am in a situation which excites any passion, it is pleasant to me to know, that the spectators of my situation enter with me into all its various circumstances, and are affected with them in the same manner as I am myself. On the other hand it is pleasant to the spectator to observe this correspondence of his emotions with mine.

3. When the spectator of another man's situation, upon bringing home to himself all its various circumstances, feels himself affected in the same manner with the person principally concerned, he approves of the affection or passion of this person as just and proper and suitable to its object. The exceptions which occur to this observation are, according to Mr. Smith, only apparent. "A stranger, for example, passes by us in the street with all the marks of the deepest affliction; and we are immediately told, that he has just received the news of the death of his father. It is impossible that, in this case, we should not approve of his grief; yet it may often happen, without any defect of humanity on our part, that, so far from entering into the violence of his sorrow, we should scarce conceive the first movements of concern upon his account. We have learned, however, from experience, that such a misfortune naturally excites such a degree of sorrow; and we know, that if we took time to examine his situation fully and in all its parts, we should, without doubt, most sincerely sympathize with him. It is upon the consciousness of this conditional sympathy that our approbation of his sorrow is founded, even in those cases in which that sympathy does not actually take place; and the general rules derived from our preceding experience of what our sentiments would commonly correspond with, correct upon this, as upon many other occasions, the impropriety of our present emotions."

By the *propriety* therefore of any affection or passion exhibited by another person, is to be understood its suitableness to the object which excites it. Of this suitableness I can judge only from the coincidence of the affection with that which I feel, when I conceive

myself in the same circumstances; and the perception of this coincidence is the foundation of the sentiment of *moral approbation.*

4. Although, when we attend to the situation of another person, and conceive ourselves to be placed in his circumstances, an emotion of the same kind with that which he feels, naturally arises in our own mind, yet this sympathetic emotion bears but a very small proportion, in point of degree, to what is felt by the person principally concerned. In order, therefore, to obtain the pleasure of mutual sympathy, nature teaches the spectator to strive as much as he can, to raise his emotion to a level with that which the object would really produce; and, on the other hand, she teaches the person whose passion this object has excited, to bring it down, as much as he can, to a level with that of the spectator.

5. Upon these two different efforts are founded two different sets of virtues. Upon the effort of the spectator to enter into the situation of the person principally concerned, and to raise his sympathetic emotions to a level with the emotions of the actor, are founded the gentle, the amiable virtues; the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity. Upon the effort of the person principally concerned to lower his own emotions, so as to correspond as nearly as possible with those of the spectator, are founded the great, the awful, and respectable virtues; the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions, which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honor, and the propriety of our own conduct, require.

As a farther illustration of the foregoing doctrine, Mr. Smith considers particularly the degrees of the different passions which are consistent with propriety, and endeavours to show, that in every case, it is decent or indecent to express a passion strongly, according as mankind are disposed or not disposed to sympathize with it. It is unbecoming, for example, to express strongly any of those passions which arise from a certain condition of the body; because other men, who are not in

the same condition, cannot be expected to sympathize with them. It is unbecoming to cry out with bodily pain; because the sympathy felt by the spectator bears no proportion to the acuteness of what is felt by the sufferer. The case is somewhat similar with those passions which take their origin from a particular turn or habit of the imagination.

In the case of the unsocial passions of hatred and resentment, the sympathy of the spectator is divided between the person who feels the passion, and the person who is the object of it. "We are concerned for both, and our fear for what the one may suffer damps our resentment for what the other has suffered." Hence the imperfect degree in which we sympathize with such passions; and the propriety, when we are under their influence, of moderating their expression to a much greater degree than is required in the case of any other emotions.

The reverse of this takes place with respect to all the social and benevolent affections. The sympathy of the spectator with the person who feels them, coincides with his concern for the person who is the object of them. It is this redoubled sympathy which renders these affections so peculiarly becoming and agreeable.

The selfish emotions of grief and joy, when they are conceived on account of our own private good or bad fortune, hold a sort of middle place between our social and our unsocial passions. They are never so graceful as the one set, nor so odious as the other. Even when excessive, they are never so disagreeable as excessive resentment; because no opposite sympathy can ever interest us against them: and when most suitable to their objects, they are never so agreeable as impartial humanity and just benevolence; because no double sympathy can ever interest us for them.

After these general speculations concerning the propriety of actions, Mr. Smith examines how far the judgments of mankind concerning it are liable to be influenced in particular cases, by the prosperous or the adverse circumstances of the agent. The scope of his reasoning on this subject is directed to show, (in oppo-

sition to the common opinion,) that when there is no envy in the case, our propensity to sympathize with joy is much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow; and, of consequence, that it is more easy to obtain the approbation of mankind in prosperity than in adversity. From the same principle he traces the origin of ambition, or of the desire of rank and preeminence; the great object of which passion is, to attain that situation which sets a man most in the view of general sympathy and attention, and gives him an easy empire over the affections of others.

Having finished the analysis of our sense of propriety and of impropriety, Mr. Smith proceeds to consider our sense of merit and demerit; which he thinks has also a reference, in the first instance, not to our own characters, but to the characters of our neighbours. In explaining the origin of this part of our moral constitution, he avails himself of the same principle of sympathy, into which he resolves the sentiment of moral approbation.

The words *propriety* and *impropriety*, when applied to an affection of the mind, are used in this theory (as has been already observed) to express the suitableness or unsuitableness of the affection to its exciting *cause*. The words *merit* and *demerit* have always a reference (according to Mr. Smith) to the *effect* which the affection tends to produce. When the tendency of an affection is beneficial, the agent appears to us a proper object of reward; when it is hurtful, he appears the proper object of punishment.

The principles in our nature which most directly prompt us to reward and to punish, are gratitude and resentment. To say of a person, therefore, that he is deserving of reward or of punishment, is to say, in other words, that he is a proper object of gratitude or of resentment; or, which amounts to the same thing, that he is to some person or persons the object of a gratitude or of a resentment, which every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with.

It is however very necessary to observe, that we do not thoroughly sympathize with the gratitude of one man towards another, merely because this other has been

the cause of his good fortune, unless he has been the cause of it from motives which we entirely go along with. Our sense, therefore, of the good desert of an action, is a compounded sentiment, made up of an indirect sympathy with the person to whom the action is beneficial, and of a direct sympathy with the affections and motives of the agent.—The same remark applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to our sense of demerit, or of ill-desert.

From these principles, it is inferred, that the only actions which appear to us deserving of reward, are actions of a beneficial tendency, proceeding from proper motives; the only actions which seem to deserve punishment, are actions of a hurtful tendency, proceeding from improper motives. A mere want of beneficence exposes to no punishment; because the mere want of beneficence tends to do no real positive evil. A man, on the other hand, who is barely innocent, and contents himself with observing strictly the laws of justice with respect to others, can merit only, that his neighbours, in their turn, should observe religiously the same laws with respect to him.

These observations lead Mr. Smith to anticipate a little the subject of the second great division of his work, by a short inquiry into the origin of our sense of justice *as applicable to our own conduct;* and also of our sentiments of remorse, and of good desert.

The origin of our sense of justice, as well as of all our other moral sentiments, he accounts for by means of the principle of sympathy. When I attend only to the feelings of my own breast, my own happiness appears to me of far greater consequence than that of all the world besides. But I am conscious, that in this excessive preference, other men cannot possibly sympathize with me, and that to them I appear only one of the crowd, in whom they are no more interested than in any other individual. If I wish, therefore, to secure their sympathy and approbation, (which, according to Mr. Smith, are the objects of the strongest desire of my nature,) it is necessary for me to regard my happiness, not in that light in which it appears to myself, but in

that light in which it appears to mankind in general. If an unprovoked injury is offered to me, I know that society will sympathize with my resentment; but if I injure the interests of another, who never injured me, merely because they stand in the way of my own, I perceive evidently, that society will sympathize with *his* resentment, and that I shall become the object of general indignation.

When, upon any occasion, I am led by the violence of passion to overlook these considerations, and, in the case of a competition of interests, to act according to may own feelings, and not according to those of impartial spectators, I never fail to incur the punishment of remorse. When my passion is gratified, and I begin to reflect coolly on my conduct, I can no longer enter into the motives from which it proceeded; it appears as improper to me as to the rest of the world; I lament the effects it has produced; I pity the unhappy sufferer whom I have injured; and I feel myself a just object of indignation to mankind. "Such," says Mr. Smith, "is the nature of that sentiment which is properly called remorse. It is made up of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; of grief for the effects of it; of pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures."

The opposite behaviour of him who, from proper motives, has performed a generous action, inspires, in a similar manner the opposite sentiment of conscious merit, or of deserved reward.

The foregoing observations contain a general summary of Mr. Smith's principles with respect to the origin of our moral sentiments, in so far at least as they relate to the conduct of others. He acknowledges, at the same time, that the sentiments of which we are conscious, on particular occasions, do not always coincide with these principles; and that they are frequently modified by other considerations very different from the propriety or impropriety of the affections of the agent, and also from the beneficial or hurtful tendency of these affections. The good or the bad consequences which

accidentally follow from an action, and which, as they do not depend on the agent, ought undoubtedly, in point of justice, to have no influence on our opinion, either of the propriety or the merit of his conduct, scarcely ever fail to influence considerably our judgment with respect to both; by leading us to form a good or a bad opinion of the prudence with which the action was performed, and by animating our sense of the merit or demerit of his design. These facts, however, do not furnish any objections which are peculiarly applicable to Mr. Smith's theory; for whatever hypothesis we may adopt with respect to the origin of our moral perceptions, all men must acknowledge, that in so far as the prosperous or the unprosperous event of an action depends on fortune or on accident, it ought neither to increase nor to diminish our moral approbation or disapprobation of the agent. And accordingly it has, in all ages of the world, been the complaint of moralists, that the actual sentiments of mankind should so often be in opposition to this equitable and indisputable maxim. In examining, therefore, this irregularity of our moral sentiments, Mr. Smith is to be considered, not as obviating an objection peculiar to his own system, but as removing a difficulty which is equally connected with every theory on the subject which has ever been proposed. So far as I know, he is the first philosopher who has been fully aware of the importance of the difficulty, and he has indeed treated it with great ability and success. The explanation which he gives of it is not warped in the least by any peculiarity in his own scheme; and, I must own, it appears to me to be the most solid and valuable improvement he has made in this branch of science. It is impossible to give any abstract of it in a sketch of this kind; and therefore I must content myself with remarking, that it consists of three parts. The first explains the causes of this irregularity of sentiment; the second, the extent of its influence; and the third, the important purposes to which it is subservient. His remarks on the last of these heads are more particularly ingenious and pleasing; as their object is to show, in opposition to what we should be disposed at first to apprehend,

that when nature implanted the seeds of this irregularity in the human breast, her leading intention was, to promote the happiness and perfection of the species.

The remaining part of Mr. Smith's theory is employed in showing, in what manner *our sense of duty* comes to be formed, in consequence of an application to ourselves of the judgments we have previously passed on the conduct of others.

In entering upon this inquiry, which is undoubtedly the most important in the work, and for which the foregoing speculations are, according to Mr. Smith's theory, a necessary preparation, he begins with stating *the fact* concerning our consciousness of merited praise or blame; and it must be owned, that the first aspect of the fact, as he himself states it, appears not very favorable to his principles. That the great object of a wise and virtuous man is not to act in such a manner as to obtain the actual approbation of those around him, but to act so as to render himself the *just* and *proper* object of their approbation, and that his satisfaction with his own conduct depends much more on the consciousness of *deserving* this approbation, than from that of really enjoying it, he candidly acknowledges; but still he insists, that although this may seem, at first view, to intimate the existence of some moral faculty which is not borrowed from without, our moral sentiments have always some secret reference, either to what are, or to what upon a certain condition would be, or to what we imagine ought to be, the sentiments of others; and that if it were possible, that a human creature could grow up to manhood without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, or of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. There is indeed a tribunal within the breast, which is the supreme arbiter of all our actions, and which often mortifies us amidst the applause, and supports us under the censure of the world; yet still, he contends, that if we inquire into the origin of its institution, we shall find, that its jurisdiction is, in a great measure, derived from the authority of that very tribunal, whose decisions it so often and so justly reverses.

When we first come into the world, we, for some time, fondly pursue the impossible project of gaining the good-will and approbation of every body. We soon however find, that this universal approbation is unattainable; that the most equitable conduct must frequently thwart the interests or the inclinations of particular persons, who will seldom have candor enough to enter into the propriety of our motives, or to see that this conduct, how disagreeable soever to them, is perfectly suitable to our situation. In order to defend ourselves from such partial judgments, we soon learn to set up in our own minds, a judge between ourselves and those we live with. We conceive ourselves as acting in the presence of a person, who has no particular relation, either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct; and we study to act in such a manner as to obtain the approbation of this supposed impartial spectator. It is only by consulting him that we can see whatever relates to ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions.

There are two different occasions, on which we examine our own conduct, and endeavour to view it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it. First, when we are about to act; and, secondly, after we have acted. In both cases, our views are very apt to be partial.

When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion seldom allows us to consider what we are doing with the candor of an indifferent person. When the action is over, and the passions which prompted it have subsided, although we can undoubtedly enter into the sentiments of the indifferent spectator much more coolly than before, yet it is so disagreeable to us to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render our judgment unfavorable.—Hence that self-deceit which is the source of half the disorders of human life.

In order to guard ourselves against its delusions, nature leads us to form insensibly, by our continual observations upon the conduct of others, certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done

or avoided. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments; and when we observe other people affected in the same manner with ourselves, we are confirmed in the belief, that our disapprobation was just. We naturally therefore lay it down as a general rule, that all such actions are to be avoided, as tending to render us odious, contemptible, or punishable; and we endeavour, by habitual reflection, to fix this general rule in our minds, in order to correct the misrepresentations of self-love, if we should ever be called on to act in similar circumstances. The man of furious resentment, if he were to listen to the dictates of that passion, would perhaps regard the death of his enemy as but a small conpensation for a trifling wrong. But his observations on the conduct of others have taught him how horrible such sanguinary revenges are; and he has impressed it on his mind as an invariable rule, to abstain from them upon all occasions. This rule preserves its authority with him, checks the impetuosity of his passion, and corrects the partial views which self-love suggests; although, if this had been the first time in which he considered such an action, he would undoubtedly have determined it to be just and proper, and what every impartial spectator would approve of.—A regard to such general rules of morality constitutes, according to Mr. Smith, what is properly called *the sense of duty.*

I before hinted, that Mr. Smith does not reject entirely from his system that principle of *utility*, of which the perception in any action or character constitutes, according to Mr. Hume, the sentiment of moral approbation. That no qualities of the mind are approved of as virtues, but such as are useful or agreeable, either to the person himself or to others, he admits to be a proposition that holds universally; and he also admits, that the sentiment of approbation with which we regard virtue, is enlivened by the perception of this utility, or, as he explains the fact, it is enlivened by our sympathy with the happiness of those to whom the utility extends: But still he insists, that it is not the view of this utility which is either the first or principal source of moral approbation.

To sum up the whole of his doctrine in a few words: "When we approve of any character or action, the sentiments which we feel are derived from four different sources. First, we sympathize with the motives of the agent; secondly, we enter into the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions; thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been agreeable to the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and, lastly, when we consider such actions as making a part of a system of behaviour which tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike that which we ascribe to any well-contrived machine." These different sentiments, he thinks, exhaust completely, in every instance that can be supposed, the compounded sentiment of moral approbation. "After deducting," says he, "in any one particular case, all that must be acknowledged to proceed from some one or other of these four principles, I should be glad to know what remains; and I shall freely allow this overplus to be ascribed to a moral sense, or to any other peculiar faculty, provided any body will ascertain precisely what this overplus is."

Mr. Smith's opinion concerning the nature of virtue, is involved in his theory concerning the principle of moral approbation. The idea of virtue, he thinks, always implies the idea of propriety, or of the suitableness of the affection to the object which excites it; which suitableness, according to him, can be determined in no other way than by the sympathy of impartial spectators with the motives or the agent. But still he apprehends, that this description of virtue is incomplete; for although in every virtuous action propriety is an essential ingredient, it is not always the sole ingredient. Beneficent actions have in them another quality, by which they appear, not only to deserve approbation, but recompense, and excite a superior degree of esteem, arising from a double sympathy with the motives of the agent, and the gratitude of those who are the objects of his affection. In this respect, beneficence appears to him to be distinguished from the

inferior virtues of prudence, vigilance, circumspection, temperance, constancy, firmness, which are always regarded with approbation, but which confer no merit. This distinction, he apprehends, has not been sufficiently attended to by moralists; the principles of some affording no explanation of the approbation we bestow on the inferior virtues; and those of others accounting as imperfectly for the peculiar excellency which the supreme virtue of beneficence is acknowledged to possess.

Such are the outlines of Mr. Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments; a work which, whatever opinion we may entertain of the justness of its conclusions, must be allowed by all to be a singular effort of invention, ingenuity, and subtilty. For my own part I must confess that it does not coincide with my notions concerning the foundation of Morals; but I am convinced, at the same time, that it contains a large mixture of important truth, and that, although the author has sometimes been misled by too great a desire of generalizing his principles, he has had the merit of directing the attention of philosophers to a view of human nature which had formerly in a great measure escaped their notice. Of the great proportion of just and sound reasoning which the theory involves, its striking plausibility is a sufficient proof; for as the author himself has remarked, no system in morals can well gain our assent, if it does not border, in some respects, upon the truth. "A system of natural philosophy," he observes, "may appear very plausible, and be for a long time very generally received in the world, and yet have no foundation in nature; but the author who should assign as the cause of any natural sentiment, some principle which neither had any connexion with it, nor resembled any other principle which had some connexion, would appear absurd and ridiculous to the most injudicious and unexperienced reader." The merit, however, of Mr. Smith's performance does not rest here. No work, undoubtedly, can be mentioned, ancient or modern, which exhibits so complete a view of those facts with respect to our moral perceptions, which it is one great object of this

branch of science to refer to their general laws; and upon this account, it well deserves the careful study of all whose taste leads them to prosecute similar inquiries. These facts are indeed frequently expressed in a language which involves the author's peculiar theories: but they are always presented in the most happy and beautiful lights; and it is easy for an attentive reader, by stripping them of hypothetical terms, to state them to himself with that logical precision, which, in such very difficult disquisitions, can alone conduct us with certainty to the truth.

It is proper to observe farther, that with the theoretical doctrines of the book, there are every where interwoven, with singular taste and address, the purest and most elevated maxims concerning the practical conduct of life; and that it abounds throughout with interesting and instructive delineations of characters and manners. A considerable part of it too is employed in collateral inquiries, which, upon every hypothesis that can be formed concerning the foundation of morals, are of equal importance. Of this kind is the speculation formerly mentioned, with respect to the influence of fortune on our moral sentiments, and another speculation, no less valuable, with respect to the influence of custom and fashion on the same part of our constitution.

The style in which Mr. Smith has conveyed the fundamental principles on which his theory rests, does not seem to me to be so perfectly suited to the subject, as that which he employs on most other occasions. In communicating ideas which are extremely abstract and subtile, and about which it is hardly possible to reason correctly, without the scrupulous use of appropriated terms, he sometimes presents to us a choice of words, by no means strictly synonymous, so as to divert the attention from a precise and steady conception of his proposition; and a similar effect is, in other instances, produced by that diversity of forms, which, in the course of his copious and seducing composition, the same truth insensibly assumes. When the subject of his work leads him to address the imagination and the heart; the variety and felicity of his illustrations; the richness

and fluency of his eloquence; and the skill with which he wins the attention and commands the passions of his readers, leave him, among our English moralists, without a rival.

The Dissertation on the Origin of Languages, which now forms a part of the same volume with the Theory of Moral Sentiments, was, I believe, first annexed to the second edition of that work. It is an essay of great ingenuity, and on which the author himself set a high value; but, in a general review of his publications, it deserves our attention less on account of the opinions it contains, than as a specimen of a particular sort of inquiry, which, so far as I know, is entirely of modern origin, and which seems, in a peculiar degree, to have interested Mr. Smith's curiosity. Something very similar to it may be traced in all his different works, whether moral, political, or literary; and on all these subjects he has exemplified it with the happiest success.

When, in such a period of society as that in which we live, we compare our intellectual acquirements, our opinions, manners, and institutions, with those which prevail among rude tribes, it cannot fail to occur to us as an interesting question, by what gradual steps the transition has been made from the first simple efforts of uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated. Whence has arisen that systematical beauty which we admire in the structure of a cultivated language; that analogy which runs through the mixture of languages spoken by the most remote and unconnected nations; and those peculiarities by which they are all distinguished from each other? Whence the origin of the different sciences and of the different arts; and by what chain has the mind been led from their first rudiments to their last and most refined improvements? Whence the astonishing fabric of the political union; the fundamental principles which are common to all governments; and the different forms which civilized society has assumed in different ages of the world? On most of these subjects very little in-

formation is to be expected from history; for long before that stage of society when men begin to think of recording their transactions, many of the most important steps of their progress have been made. A few insulated facts may perhaps be collected from the casual observations of travellers, who have viewed the arrangements of rude nations; but nothing, it is evident, can be obtained in this way, which approaches to a regular and connected detail of human improvement.

In this want of direct evidence, we are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation. In such inquiries, the detached facts which travels and voyages afford us, may frequently serve as land-marks to our speculations; and sometimes our conclusions *a priori*, may tend to confirm the credibility of facts, which, on a superficial view, appeared to be doubtful or incredible.

Nor are such theoretical views of human affairs subservient merely to the gratification of curiosity. In examining the history of mankind, as well as in examining the phenomena of the material world, when we cannot trace the process by which an event *has been* produced, it is often of importance to be able to show how it *may have been* produced by natural causes. Thus, in the instance which has suggested these remarks, although it is impossible to determine with certainty what the steps were by which any particular language was formed, yet if we can show, from the known principles of human nature, how all its various parts might gradually have arisen, the mind is not only to a certain degree satisfied, but a check is given to that indolent philosophy, which refers to a miracle, whatever appearances, both in the natural and moral worlds, it is unable to explain.

To this species of philosophical investigation, which has no appropriated name in our language, I shall take the liberty of giving the title of *Theoretical* or *Conjectural History;* an expression which coincides pretty near-

ly in its meaning with that of *Natural History*, as employed by Mr. Hume,* and with what some French writers have called *Histoire Raisonnée*.

The mathematical sciences, both pure and mixed, afford, in many of their branches, very favorable subjects for theoretical history; and a very competent judge, the late M. d'Alembert, has recommended this arrangement of their elementary principles, which is founded on the natural succession of inventions and discoveries, as the best adapted for interesting the curiosity and exercising the genius of students. The same author points out as a model a passage in Montucla's History of Mathematics, where an attempt is made to exhibit the gradual progress of philosophical speculation, from the first conclusions suggested by a general survey of the heavens, to the doctrine of Copernicus. It is somewhat remarkable, that a theoretical history of this very science (in which we have, perhaps, a better opportunity than in any other instance whatever, of comparing the natural advances of the mind with the actual succession of hypothetical systems) was one of Mr. Smith's earliest compositions, and is one of the very small number of his manuscripts which he did not destroy before his death.

I already hinted, that inquiries perfectly analogous to these may be applied to the modes of government, and to the municipal institutions which have obtained among different nations. It is but lately, however, that these important subjects have been considered in this point of view; the greater part of politicians before the time of Montesquieu having contented themselves with an historical statement of facts, and with a vague reference of laws to the wisdom of particular legislators, or to accidental circumstances, which it is now impossible to ascertain. Montesquieu, on the contrary, considered laws as originating chiefly from the circumstances of society; and attempted to account, from the changes in the condition of mankind, which take place in the different stages of their progress, for the corresponding

* See his Natural History of Religion.

alterations which their institutions undergo. It is thus, that in his occasional elucidations of the Roman jurisprudence, instead of bewildering himself among the erudition of scholiasts and of antiquaries, we frequently find him borrowing his lights from the most remote and unconnected quarters of the globe, and combining the casual observations of illiterate travellers and navigators, into a philosophical commentary on the history of law and of manners.

The advances made in this line of inquiry since Montesquieu's time have been great. Lord Kames, in his Historical Law Tracts, has given some excellent specimens of it, particularly in his Essays on the History of Property and of Criminal Law, and many ingenious speculations of the same kind occur in the works of Mr. Millar.

In Mr. Smith's writings, whatever be the nature of his subject, he seldom misses an opportunity of indulging his curiosity, in tracing from the principles of human nature, or from the circumstances of society, the origin of the opinions and the institutions which he describes. I formerly mentioned a fragment concerning the History of Astronomy which he has left for publication; and I have heard him say more than once, that he had projected, in the earlier part of his life, a history of the other sciences on the same plan. In his Wealth of Nations, various disquisitions are introduced which have a like object in view, particularly the theoretical delineation he has given of the natural progress of opulence in a country; and his investigation of the causes which have inverted this order in the different countries of modern Europe. His lectures on jurisprudence seem, from the account of them formerly given, to have abounded in such inquiries.

I am informed by the same gentleman who favored me with the account of Mr. Smith's lectures at Glasgow, that he had heard him sometimes hint an intention of writing a treatise upon the Greek and Roman republics. "And after all that has been published on that subject, I am convinced," says he, "that the observations of Mr. Smith would have suggested many new and impor-

tant views concerning the internal and domestic circumstances of those nations, which would have displayed their several systems of policy, in a light much less artificial than that in which they have hitherto appeared."

The same turn of thinking was frequently, in his social hours, applied to more familiar subjects; and the fanciful theories which, without the least affectation of ingenuity, he was continually starting upon all the common topics of discourse, gave to his conversation a novelty and variety that were quite inexhaustible. Hence, too, the minuteness and accuracy of his knowledge on many trifling articles which, in the course of his speculations, he had been led to consider from some new and interesting point of view; and of which his lively and circumstantial descriptions amused his friends the more, that he seemed to be habitually inattentive, in so remarkable a degree, to what was passing around him.

I have been led into these remarks by the Dissertation on the Formation of Languages, which exhibits a very beautiful specimen of theoretical history, applied to a subject equally curious and difficult. The analogy between the train of thinking from which it has taken its rise, and that which has suggested a variety of his other disquisitions, will, I hope, be a sufficient apology for the length of this digression; more particularly, as it will enable me to simplify the account which I am to give afterwards, of his inquiries concerning political economy.

I shall only observe farther on this head, that when different theoretical histories are proposed by different writers, of the progress of the human mind in any one line of exertion, these theories are not always to be understood as standing in opposition to each other. If the progress delineated in all of them be plausible, it is possible at least, that they may all have been realized; for human affairs never exhibit, in any two instances, a perfect uniformity. But whether they have been realized or no, is often a question of little consequence. In most cases, it is of more importance to ascertain the progress that is most simple, than the progress that is most agreeable to fact; for, paradoxical as the propo-

sition may appear, it is certainly true, that the real progress is not always the most natural. It may have been determined by particular accidents, which are not likely again to occur, and which cannot be considered as forming any part of that general provision which nature has made for the improvement of the race.

In order to make some amends for the length (I am afraid I may add for the tediousness) of this section, I shall subjoin to it an original letter of Mr. Hume's, addressed to Mr. Smith, soon after the publication of his Theory. It is strongly marked with that easy and affectionate pleasantry which distinguished Mr. Hume's epistolary correspondence, and is entitled to a place in this Memoir, on account of its connexion with an important event of Mr. Smith's life, which soon after removed him into a new scene, and influenced to a considerable degree, the subsequent course of his studies. The letter is dated from London, 12th April, 1759.

"I give you thanks for the agreeable present of your Theory. Wedderburn and I made presents of our copies to such of our acquaintances as we thought good judges, and proper to spread the reputation of the book. I sent one to the Duke of Argyle, to Lord Lyttleton, Horace Walpole, Soame Jennyns, and Burke, an Irish gentleman, who wrote lately a very pretty treatise on the Sublime. Millar desired my permission to send one in your name to Dr. Warburton. I have delayed writing to you till I could tell you something of the success of the book, and could prognosticate with some probability, whether it should be finally damned to oblivion, or should be registered in the temple of immortality. Though it has been published only a few weeks, I think there appear already such strong symptoms, that I can almost venture to foretel its fate. It is in short this——————. But I have been interrupted in my letter by a foolish and impertinent visit of one who has lately come from Scotland. He tells me that the University of Glasgow intended to declare Rouet's office vacant, upon his going abroad with Lord Hope. I ques-

tion not but you will have our friend Ferguson in your eye, in case another project for procuring him a place in the University of Edinburgh should fail. Ferguson has very much polished and improved his treatise on Refinement,* and with some amendments it will make an admirable book, and discovers an elegant and a singular genius. The Epigoniad, I hope, will do; but it is somewhat up-hill work. As I doubt not but you consult the reviews sometimes at present, you will see in the Critical Review a letter upon that poem; and I desire you to employ your conjectures in finding out the author. Let me see a sample of your skill in knowing hands by your guessing at the person. I am afraid of Lord Kames's Law Tracts. A man might as well think of making a fine sauce by a mixture of wormwood and aloes, as an agreeable composition by joining metaphysics and Scotch law. However, the book, I believe, has merit; though few people will take the pains of diving into it. But, to return to your book, and its success in this town, I must tell you————. A plague of interruptions! I ordered myself to be denied; and yet here is one that has broke in upon me again. He is a man of letters, and we have had a good deal of literary conversation. You told me that you was curious of literary anecdotes, and therefore I shall inform you of a few that have come to my knowledge. I believe I have mentioned to you already Helvetius's book *de l'Esprit*. It is worth your reading, not for its philosophy, which I do not highly value, but for its agreeable composition. I had a letter from him a few days ago, wherein he tells me that my name was much oftener in the manuscript, but that the Censor of books at Paris obliged him to strike it out. Voltaire has lately published a small work called *Candide, ou l'Optimisme*. I shall give you a detail of it———. But what is all this to my book? say you.—My dear Mr. Smith, have patience: Compose yourself to tranquillity: Show yourself a philosopher in practice as well as profession:

* Published afterwards under the title of "An Essay on the History of Civil Society."

Think on the emptiness, and rashness, and futility of the common judgments of men: How little they are regulated by reason in any subject, much more in philosophical subjects, which so far exceed the comprehension of the vulgar.

'Non si quid turbida Roma
Elevet; accedas: examenve improbum in illâ
Castiges trutinâ: nec te quæsiveris extra.'

A wise man's kingdom is his own breast; or, if he ever looks farther, it will only be to the judgment of a select few, who are free from prejudices, and capable of examining his work. Nothing indeed can be a stronger presumption of falsehood than the approbation of the multitude; and Phocion, you know always suspected himself of some blunder, when he was attended with the applauses of the populace.

"Supposing, therefore, that you have duly prepared yourself for the worst by all these reflections, I proceed to tell you the melancholy news, that your book has been very unfortunate; for the public seem disposed to applaud it extremely. It was looked for by the foolish people with some impatience; and the mob of literati are beginning already to be very loud in its praises. Three Bishops called yesterday at Millar's shop in order to buy copies, and to ask questions about the author. The Bishop of Peterborough said he had passed the evening in a company where he heard it extolled above all books in the world. The Duke of Argyle is more decisive than he uses to be in its favor. I suppose he either considers it as an exotic, or thinks the author will be serviceable to him in the Glasgow elections. Lord Lyttleton says, that Robertson and Smith and Bower are the glories of English literature. Oswald protests he does not know whether he has reaped more instruction or entertainment from it. But you may easily judge what reliance can be put on his judgment, who has been engaged all his life in public business, and who never sees any faults in his friends. Millar exults and brags that two thirds of the edition are already sold, and that he is now sure of success. You see what a son of the earth that is, to value books only by the profit they bring him. In that view, I believe it may prove a very good book.

"Charles Townsend, who passes for the cleverest fellow in England, is so taken with the performance, that he said to Oswald he would put the Duke of Buccleugh under the author's care, and would make it worth his while to accept of that charge. As soon as I heard this, I called on him twice, with a view of talking with him about the matter, and of convincing him of the propriety of sending that young Nobleman to Glasgow: For I could not hope, that he could offer you any terms which would tempt you to renounce your Professorship: But I missed him. Mr. Townsend passes for being a little uncertain in his resolutions; so perhaps you need not build much on this sally.

"In recompence for so many mortifying things, which nothing but truth could have extorted from me, and which I could easily have multiplied to a greater number, I doubt not but you are so good a Christian as to return good for evil; and to flatter my vanity by telling me, that all the godly in Scotland abuse me for my account of John Knox and the Reformation. I suppose you are glad to see my paper end, and that I am obliged to conclude with

Your Humble Servant,

DAVID HUME."

SECTION III.

From the Publication of The Theory of Moral Sentiments, till that of The Wealth of Nations.

After the publication of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, Mr. Smith remained four years at Glasgow, discharging his official duties with unabated vigor, and with increasing reputation. During that time, the plan of his lectures underwent a considerable change. His ethical doctrines, of which he had now published so valuable a part, occupied a much smaller portion of the course than formerly: and accordingly, his attention was naturally directed to a more complete illustration of the principles of jurisprudence and of political economy.

To this last subject, his thoughts appear to have been occasionally turned from a very early period of life. It is probable, that the uninterrupted friendship he had always maintained with his old companion Mr. Oswald had some tendency to encourage him in prosecuting this branch of his studies; and the publication of Mr. Hume's political discourses in the year 1752, could not fail to confirm him in those liberal views of commercial policy which had already opened to him in the course of his own inquiries. His long residence in one of the most enlightened mercantile towns in this island, and the habits of intimacy in which he lived with the most respectable of its inhabitants, afforded him an opportunity of deriving what commercial information he stood in need of, from the best sources; and it is a circumstance no less honorable to their liberality than to his talents, that notwithstanding the reluctance so common among men of business to listen to the conclusions of mere speculation, and the direct opposition of his leading principles to all the old maxims of trade, he was able, before he quitted his situation in the University, to rank some very eminent merchants in the number of his proselytes.*

Among the students who attended his lectures, and whose minds were not previously warped by prejudice, the progress of his opinions, it may be reasonably supposed, was much more rapid. It was this class of his friends accordingly that first adopted his system with eagerness, and diffused a knowledge of its fundamental principles over this part of the kingdom.

Towards the end of 1763, Mr. Smith received an invitation from Mr. Charles Townsend to accompany the Duke of Buccleugh on his travels; and the liberal terms in which the proposal was made to him, added to the strong desire he had felt of visiting the continent of Europe, induced him to resign his office at Glasgow. With the connexion which he was led to form in consequence of this change in his situation, he had reason

* I mention this fact on the respectable authority of James Ritchie, Esq. of Glasgow.

to be satisfied in an uncommon degree, and he always spoke of it with pleasure and gratitude. To the public, it was not perhaps a change equally fortunate; as it interrupted that studious leisure for which nature seems to have destined him, and in which alone he could have hoped to accomplish those literary projects which had flattered the ambition of his youthful genius.

The alteration, however, which, from this period, took place in his habits, was not without its advantages. He had hitherto lived chiefly within the walls of an University; and although to a mind like his, the observation of human nature on the smallest scale is sufficient to convey a tolerably just conception of what passes on the great theatre of the world, yet it is not to be doubted, that the variety of scenes through which he afterwards passed, must have enriched his mind with many new ideas, and corrected many of those misapprehensions of life and manners which the best descriptions of them can scarcely fail to convey.—But whatever were the lights that his travels afforded to him as a student of human nature, they were probably useful in a still greater degree, in enabling him to perfect that system of political economy, of which he had already delivered the principles in his lectures at Glasgow, and which it was now the leading object of his studies to prepare for the public. The coincidence between some of these principles and the distinguishing tenets of the French economists, who were at that very time in the height of their reputation, and the intimacy in which he lived with some of the leaders of that sect, could not fail to assist him in methodizing and digesting his speculations; while the valuable collection of facts, accumulated by the zealous industry of their numerous adherents, furnished him with ample materials for illustrating and confirming his theoretical conclusions.

After leaving Glasgow, Mr. Smith joined the Duke of Buccleugh at London early in the year 1764, and set out with him for the Continent in the month of March following. At Dover they were met by Sir James Macdonald, who accompanied them to Paris, and with whom Mr. Smith laid the foundation of a friendship, which he

always mentioned with great sensibility, and of which he often lamented the short duration. The panegyrics with which the memory of this accomplished and amiable person has been honored by so many distinguished characters in the different countries of Europe, are a proof how well fitted his talents were to command general admiration. The esteem in which his abilities and learning were held by Mr. Smith, is a testimony to his extraordinary merit of still superior value. Mr. Hume, too, seems, in this instance, to have partaken of his friend's enthusiasm. "Were you and I together," says he in a letter to Mr. Smith, "we should shed tears at present for the death of poor Sir James Macdonald. We could not possibly have suffered a greater loss than in that valuable young man."

In this first visit to Paris, the Duke of Buccleugh and Mr. Smith employed only ten or twelve days,* after which they proceeded to Thoulouse, where they fixed their residence for eighteen months; and where, in addition to the pleasure of an agreeable society, Mr. Smith had an opportunity of correcting and extending his information concerning the internal policy of France by the intimacy in which he lived with some of the principal persons of the Parliament.

From Thoulouse they went, by a pretty extensive tour, through the south of France to Geneva. Here they

* The day after his arrival at Paris, Mr. Smith sent a formal resignation of his Professorship to the Rector of the University of Glasgow. "I never was more anxious," says he in the conclusion of this letter, "for the good of the College, than at this moment; and I sincerely wish, that whoever is my successor may not only do credit to the office by his abilities, but be a comfort to the very excellent men with whom he is likely to spend his life, by the probity of his heart and the goodness of his temper."

The following extract from the records of the University, which follows immediately after Mr. Smith's letter of resignation, is at once a testimony to his assiduity as a professer, and a proof of the just sense which that learned body entertained of the talents and worth of the colleague they had lost:

"The meeting accept of Dr. Smith's resignation, in terms of the above letter, and the office of Professor of Moral Philosophy in this University is therefore hereby declared to be vacant. The University, at the same time, cannot help expressing their sincere regret at the removal of Dr. Smith, whose distinguished probity and amiable qualities procured him the esteem and affection of his colleagues; and whose uncommon genius, great abilities, and extensive learning, did so much honor to this society; his elegant and ingenious Theory of Moral Sentiments having recommended him to the esteem of men of taste and literature throughout Europe. His happy talent in illustrating abstracted subjects, and faithful assiduity in communicating useful knowledge, distinguished him as a professor, and at once afforded the greatest pleasure and the most important instruction to the youth under his care."

passed two months. The late Earl Stanhope, for whose learning and worth Mr. Smith entertained a sincere respect, was then an inhabitant of that republic.

About Christmas 1765, they returned to Paris, and remained there till October following. The society in which Mr. Smith spent these ten months, may be conceived from the advantages he enjoyed, in consequence of the recommendations of Mr. Hume. Turgot, Quesnai, Necker, D'Alembert, Helvetius, Marmontel, Madame Riccoboni, were among the number of his acquaintances; and some of them he continued ever afterwards to reckon among his friends. From Madame d'Anville, the respectable mother of the late excellent and much lamented Duke of Rochefoucauld,* he received many

---

* The following letter, which has been very accidentally preserved, while it serves as a memorial of Mr. Smith's connexion with the family of Rochefoucauld is so expressive of the virtuous and liberal mind of the writer, that I am persuaded it will give pleasure to the society to record it in their transactions.

Paris, 3. *Mars*, 1778.

"Le desir de se rappeller à votre souvenir, Monsieur, quand on a eu l'honneur de vous connoître, doit vous paroître fort naturel; permettez que nous saisissions pour cela, ma Mère et moi, l'occasion d'une edition nouvelle des *Maximes de la Rochefoucauld*, dont nous prenons la liberté de vous offrir un exemplaire. Vous voyez que nous n'avons point de rancune, puisque le mal que vous avez dit de lui dans la *Théorie de Sentimens Moraux*, ne nous empêche point de vous envoyer ce même ouvrage. Il s'en est même fallu de peu que je ne fisse encore plus, car j'avois eu peutêtre la témérité d'entreprendre une traduction de votre *Théorie:* mais comme je venois de terminer la première partie, j'ai vu paroître la traduction de M. l'Abbé Blavert, et j'ai été forcé de renoncer au plaisir que j'aurois eu de faire passer dans ma langue un des meilleurs ouvrages de la vôtre.

"Il auroit bien fallu pour lors entreprendre une justification de mon grandpère. Peutêtre n'auroit-il pas été difficile, premièrement de l'excuser, en disant, qu'il avoit toujours vu les hommes à la Cour, et dans la guerre civile, *deux théatres sur lesquels ils sont certainement plus mauvais qu'ailleurs*; et ensuite de justifier par la conduite personelle de l'auteur, les principes qui sont certainement trop généralisés dans son ouvrage. Il a pris la partie pour le tout; et parceque les gens qu'il avoit eu le plus sous les yeux étoient animés par *l'amour propre*, il en a fait le mobile général de tous les hommes. Au reste, quoique son ouvrage merite à certains égards d'être combattu, il est cependant estimable même pour le fond, et beaucoup pour la forme.

"Permettez moi de vous demander, si nous aurons bientôt une édition complette des œuvres de votre illustre ami M. Hume? Nous l'avons sincèrement regretté.

"Recevez, je vous supplie, l'expression sincère de tous les sentimens d'estime et d'attachement avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Le Duc de la ROCHEFOUCAULD."

Mr. Smith's last intercourse with this excellent man was in the year 1789, when he informed him by means of a friend who happened to be then at Paris, that in the future editions of his *Theory* the name of Rochefoucauld should be no longer classed with that of Mandeville. In the enlarged edition accordingly of that work, published a short time before his death, he has suppressed his censure of the author of the *Maximes;* who seems indeed (however exceptionable many of his principles may be) to have been actuated, both in his life and writings, by motives very different

attentions, which he always recollected with particular gratitude.

It is much to be regretted, that he preserved no journal of this very interesting period of his history; and such was his aversion to write letters, that I scarcely suppose any memorial of it exists in his correspondence with his friends. The extent and accuracy of his memory, in which he was equalled by few, made it of little consequence to himself to record in writing what he heard or saw; and from his anxiety before his death to destroy all the papers in his possession, he seems to have wished, that no materials should remain for his biographers, but what were furnished by the lasting monuments of his genius, and the exemplary worth of his private life.

The satisfaction he enjoyed in the conversation of Turgot may be easily imagined. Their opinions on the most essential points of political economy were the same; and they were both animated by the same zeal for the best interests of mankind. The favorite studies, too, of both had directed their inquiries to subjects on which the understandings of the ablest and the best informed are liable to be warped, to a great degree, by prejudice and passion; and on which, of consequence, a coincidence of judgment is peculiarly gratifying. We are told by one of the biographers of Turgot, that after his retreat from the ministry, he occupied his leisure in a philosophical correspondence with some of his old friends; and, in particular, that various letters on important subjects passed between him and Mr. Smith. I take notice of this anecdote chiefly as a proof of the intimacy which was understood to have subsisted between them; for in other respects, the anecdote seems to me to be somewhat doubtful. It is scarcely to be supposed, that Mr. Smith would destroy the letters of such a correspondent as Turgot; and still less probable, that such an intercourse was carried on between them without the knowledge of any of Mr. Smith's friends.

---

from those of Mandeville. The real scope of these Maxims is placed, I think, in a just light by the ingenious author of the *notice* prefixed to the edition of them published at Paris in 1778.

From some inquiries that have been made at Paris by a gentleman of this Society since Mr. Smith's death, I have reason to believe, that no evidence of the correspondence exists among the papers of M. Turgot, and that the whole story has taken its rise from a report suggested by the knowledge of their former intimacy. This circumstance I think it of importance to mention, because a good deal of curiosity has been excited by the passage in question, with respect to the fate of the supposed letters.

Mr. Smith was also well known to M. Quesnai, the profound and original author of the Œconomical Table; a man (according to Mr. Smith's account of him) "of the greatest modesty and simplicity;" and whose system of political economy he has pronounced, "with all its imperfections," to be "the nearest approximation to the truth that has yet been published on the principles of that very important science." If he had not been prevented by Quesnai's death, Mr. Smith had once an intention (as he told me himself) to have inscribed to him his "Wealth of Nations."

It was not, however, merely the distinguished men who about this period fixed so splendid an æra in the literary history of France, that excited Mr. Smith's curiosity while he remained in Paris. His acquaintance with the polite literature both of ancient and modern times was extensive; and amidst his various other occupations, he had never neglected to cultivate a taste for the fine arts;—less, it is probable, with a view to the peculiar enjoyments they convey, (though he was by no means without sensibility to their beauties,) than on account of their connexion with the general principles of the human mind; to an examination of which they afford the most pleasing of all avenues. To those who speculate on this very delicate subject, a comparison of the modes of taste that prevail among different nations, affords a valuable collection of facts; and Mr. Smith, who was always disposed to ascribe to custom and fashion their full share in regulating the opinions of mankind with respect to beauty, may naturally be supposed to have availed himself of every opportunity

which a foreign country afforded him of illustrating his former theories.

Some of his peculiar notions too, with respect to the imitative arts, seem to have been much confirmed by his observations while abroad. In accounting for the pleasure we receive from these arts, it had early occurred to him as a fundamental principle, that a very great part of it arises from the difficulty of the imitation; a principle which was probably suggested to him by that of the *difficulté surmontée* by which some French critics had attempted to explain the effect of versification and of rhyme.* This principle Mr. Smith pushed to the greatest possible length, and referred to it, with singular ingenuity, a great variety of phenomena in all the different fine arts. It led him, however, to some conclusions, which appear, at first view at least, not a little paradoxical; and I cannot help thinking, that it warped his judgment in many of the opinions which he was accustomed to give on the subject of poetry.

The principles of Dramatic composition had more particularly attracted his attention; and the history of the theatre, both in ancient and modern times, had furnished him with some of the most remarkable facts on which his theory of the imitative arts was founded. From this theory it seemed to follow as a consequence, that the same circumstances which, in tragedy, give to blank verse an advantage over prose, should give to rhyme an advantage over blank verse; and Mr. Smith had always inclined to that opinion. Nay, he had gone so far as to extend the same doctrine to comedy; and to regret that those excellent pictures of life and manners which the English stage affords, had not been executed after the model of the French school. The admiration with which he regarded the great dramatic authors of France tended to confirm him in these opinions; and this admiration (resulting originally from the general character of his taste, which delighted more to remark that pliancy of genius which accommodates itself to established rules, than to wonder at the bolder flights of an undisciplined imagination) was increased to a great

* See the Preface to Voltaire's *Œdipe*, Edit. of 1729.

degree, when he saw the beauties that had struck him in the closet, heightened by the utmost perfection of theatrical exhibition. In the last years of his life, he sometimes amused himself, at a leisure hour, in supporting his theoretical conclusions on these subjects, by the facts, which his subsequent studies and observations had suggested; and he intended, if he had lived, to have prepared the result of these labors for the press. Of this work he has left for publication a short fragment; but he had not proceeded far enough to apply his doctrine to versification and to the theatre. As his notions, however, with respect to these were a favorite topic of his conversation, and were intimately connected with his general principles of criticism, it would have been improper to pass them over in this sketch of his life; and I even thought it proper to detail them at greater length than the comparative importance of the subject would have justified, if he had carried his plans into execution. Whether his love of system, added to his partiality for the French drama, may not have led him, in this instance, to generalize a little too much his conclusions, and to overlook some peculiarities in the language and versification of that country, I shall not take upon me to determine.

In October 1766, the Duke of Buccleugh returned to London. His Grace, to whom I am indebted for several particulars in the foregoing narrative, will, I hope, forgive the liberty I take in transcribing one paragraph in his own words: "In October 1766, we returned to London, after having spent near three years together, without the slightest disagreement or coolness;—on my part, with every advantage that could be expected from the society of such a man. We continued to live in friendship till the hour of his death; and I shall always remain with the impression of having lost a friend whom I loved and respected, not only for his great talents, but for every private virtue."

The retirement in which Mr. Smith passed his next ten years, formed a striking contrast to the unsettled mode of life he had been for some time accustomed to, but was so congenial to his natural disposition, and to his first habits, that it was with the utmost difficulty

he was ever persuaded to leave it. During the whole of this period, (with the exception of a few visits to Edinburgh and London,) he remained with his mother at Kirkaldy; occupied habitually in intense study, but unbending his mind at times in the company of some of his old school-fellows, whose "sober wishes" had attached them to the place of their birth. In the society of such men, Mr. Smith delighted; and to them he was endeared, not only by his simple and unassuming manners, but by the perfect knowledge they all possessed of those domestic virtues which had distinguished him from his infancy.

Mr. Hume, who (as he tells us himself) considered "a town as the true scene for a man of letters," made many attempts to seduce him from his retirement. In a letter, dated in 1772, he urges him to pass some time with him in Edinburgh. "I shall not take any excuse from your state of health, which I suppose only a subterfuge invented by indolence and love of solitude. Indeed, my dear Smith, if you continue to hearken to complaints of this nature, you will cut yourself out entirely from human society, to the great loss of both parties." In another letter, dated in 1769, from his house in James's Court, (which commanded a prospect of the frith of Forth, and of the opposite coast of Fife,) "I am glad," says he "to have come within sight of you; but as I would also be within speaking terms of you, I wish we could concert measures for that purpose. I am mortally sick at sea, and regard with horror and a kind of hydrophobia the great gulph that lies between us. I am also tired of travelling, as much as you ought naturally to be of staying at home. I therefore propose to you to come hither, and pass some days with me in this solitude. I want to know what you have been doing, and propose to exact a rigorous account of the method in which you have employed yourself during your retreat. I am positive you are in the wrong in many of your speculations, especially where you have the misfortune to differ from me. All these are reasons for our meeting, and I wish you would make me some reasonable proposal for that purpose. There is no habitation in

the island of Inchkeith, otherwise I should challenge you to meet me on that spot, and neither of us ever to leave the place, till we were fully agreed on all points of controversy. I expect General Conway here tomorrow, whom I shall attend to Roseneath, and I shall remain there a few days. On my return, I hope to find a letter from you, containing a bold acceptance of this defiance."

At length (in the beginning of the year 1776) Mr. Smith accounted to the world for his long retreat, by the publication of his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations." A letter of congratulation on this event, from Mr. Hume, is now before me. It is dated 1st April, 1776, (about six months before Mr. Hume's death,) and discovers an amiable solicitude about his friend's literary fame. "*Euge! Belle!* Dear Mr. Smith: I am much pleased with your performance, and the perusal of it has taken me from a state of great anxiety. It was a work of so much expectation, by yourself, by your friends, and by the public, that I trembled for its appearance; but am now much relieved. Not but that the reading of it necessarily requires so much attention, and the public is disposed to give so little, that I shall still doubt for some time of its being at first very popular. But it has depth and solidity and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts, that it must at last take the public attention. It is probably much improved by your last abode in London. If you were here at my fire-side, I should dispute some of your principles. . . . . But these, and a hundred other points, are fit only to be discussed in conversation. I hope it will be soon; for I am in a very bad state of health, and cannot afford a long delay."

Of a book which is now so universally known as "The Wealth of Nations," it might be considered perhaps as superfluous to give a particular analysis; and at any rate, the limits of this essay make it impossible for me to attempt it at present. A few remarks, however, on the object and tendency of the work, may, I hope, be introduced without impropriety. The history

of a Philosopher's life can contain little more than the history of his speculations; and in the case of such an author as Mr. Smith, whose studies were systematically directed from his youth to subjects of the last importance to human happiness, a review of his writings, while it serves to illustrate the peculiarities of his genius, affords the most faithful picture of his character as a man.

SECTION IV.

*Of the Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.**

An historical review of the different forms under which human affairs have appeared in different ages and nations, naturally suggests the question, Whether the experience of former times may not now furnish some general principles to enlighten and direct the policy of future legislators? The discussion, however, to which this question leads, is of singular difficulty; as it requires an accurate analysis of by far the most complicated class of phenomena that can possibly engage our attention, those which result from the intricate and often the imperceptible mechanism of political society;—a subject of observation which seems, at first view, so little commensurate to our faculties, that it has been generally regarded with the same passive emotions of wonder and submission, with which, in the material world, we survey the effects produced, by the mysterious and uncontrollable operation of physical causes. It is fortunate that upon this, as on many other occasions, the difficulties which had long baffled the efforts of solitary genius begin to appear less formidable to the united exertions of the race; and that in proportion as the ex-

* The length to which this Memoir has already extended, together with some other reasons, which it is unnecessary to mention here, have induced me, in printing the following section, to confine myself to a much more general view of the subject than I once intended.

perience and the reasonings of different individuals are brought to bear upon the same objects, and are combined in such a manner as to illustrate and to limit each other, the science of politics assumes more and more that systematical form which encourages and aids the labors of future inquirers.

In prosecuting the science of politics on this plan, little assistance is to be derived from the speculations of ancient philosophers, the greater part of whom, in their political inquiries, confined their attention to a comparison of different forms of government, and to an examination of the provisions they made for perpetuating their own existence, and for extending the glory of the state. It was reserved for modern times to investigate those universal principles of justice and of expediency, which ought, under every form of government, to regulate the social order; and of which the object is, to make as equitable a distribution as possible, among all the different members of a community, of the advantages arising from the political union.

The invention of printing was perhaps necessary to prepare the way for these researches. In those departments of literature and of science, where genius finds within itself the materials of its labors; in poetry, in pure geometry, and in some branches of moral philosophy; the ancients have not only laid the foundations on which we are to build, but have left great and finished models for our imitation. But in physics, where our progress depends on an immense collection of facts, and on a combination of the accidental lights daily struck out in the innumerable walks of observation and experiment; and in politics, where the materials of our theories are equally scattered, and are collected and arranged with still greater difficulty, the means of communication afforded by the press have, in the course of two centuries, accelerated the progress of the human mind, far beyond what the most sanguine hopes of our predecessors could have imagined.

The progress already made in this science, inconsiderable as it is in comparison of what may be yet expected, has been sufficient to show, that the happiness

of mankind depends, not on the share which the people possesses, directly or indirectly, in the enactment of laws, but on the equity and expediency of the laws that are enacted. The share which the people possesses in the government is interesting chiefly to the small number of men whose object is the attainment of political importance; but the equity and expediency of the laws are interesting to every member of the community: and more especially to those whose personal insignificance leaves them no encouragement, but what they derive from the general spirit of the government under which they live.

It is evident, therefore, that the most important branch of political science is that which has for its object to ascertain the philosophical principles of jurisprudence; or (as Mr. Smith expresses it) to ascertain "the general principles which ought to run through and be the foundation of the laws of all nations." * In countries, where the prejudices of the people are widely at variance with these principles, the political liberty which the constitution bestows, only furnishes them with the means of accomplishing their own ruin: And if it were possible to suppose these principles completely realized in any system of laws, the people would have little reason to complain, that they were not immediately instrumental in their enactment. The only infallible criterion of the excellence of any constitution is to be found in the detail of its municipal code; and the value which wise men set on political freedom, arises chiefly from the facility it is supposed to afford, for the introduction of those legislative improvements which the general interests of the community recommend.—I cannot help adding, that the capacity of a people to exercise political rights with utility to themselves and to their country, presupposes a diffusion of knowledge and of good morals, which can only result from the previous operation of laws favorable to industry, to order, and to freedom.

Of the truth of these remarks, enlightened politicians

* See the conclusion of his Theory of Moral Sentiments.

seem now to be in general convinced; for the most celebrated works which have been produced in the different countries of Europe, during the last thirty years, by Smith, Quesnai, Turgot, Campomanes, Beccaria, and others, have aimed at the improvement of society,—not by delineating plans of new constitutions, but by enlightening the policy of actual legislators. Such speculations, while they are more essentially and more extensively useful than any others, have no tendency to unhinge established institutions, or to inflame the passions of the multitude. The improvements they recommend are to be effected by means too gradual and slow in their operation, to warm the imaginations of any but of the speculative few; and in proportion as they are adopted, they consolidate the political fabric, and enlarge the basis upon which it rests.

To direct the policy of nations with respect to one most important class of its laws, those which form its system of political economy, is the great aim of Mr. Smith's *Inquiry:* And he has unquestionably had the merit of presenting to the world the most comprehensive and perfect work that has yet appeared, on the general principles of any branch of legislation. The example which he has set will be followed, it is to be hoped, in due time, by other writers, for whom the internal policy of states furnishes many other subjects of discussion no less curious than interesting; and may accelerate the progress of that science which Lord Bacon has so well described in the following passage: "Finis et scopus quem leges intueri, atque ad quem jussiones et sanctiones suas dirigere debent, non alius est, quam ut cives feliciter degant: id fiet, si pietate et religione recte instituti; moribus honesti; armis adversus hostes externos tuti; legum auxilio adversus seditiones et privatas injurias muniti; imperio et magistratibus obsequentes; copiis et opibus locupletes et florentes fuerint.—Certe cognitio ista ad viros civiles proprie spectat; qui optime nôrunt, quid ferat societas humana, quid salus populi, quid æquitas naturalis, quid gentium mores, quid rerumpublicarum formæ diversæ: ideoque possint de legibus, ex principiis et præceptis tam æquitatis na-

turalis, quam politices decernere. Quamobrem id nunc agatur, ut fontes justitiæ et utilitatis publicæ petantur, et in singulis juris partibus character quidam et idea justi exhibeatur, ad quam particularium regnorum et rerumpublicarum leges probare, atque inde emendationem moliri, quisque, cui hoc cordi erit et curæ, possit." The enumeration contained in the foregoing passage, of the different objects of law, coincides very nearly with that given by Mr. Smith in the conclusion of his Theory of Moral Sentiments; and the precise aim of the political speculations which he then announced, and of which he afterwards published so valuable a part in his Wealth of Nations, was to ascertain the general principles of justice and of expediency, which ought to guide the institutions of legislators on these important articles;—in the words of Lord Bacon, to ascertain those *leges legum*, "ex quibus informatio peti possit, quid in singulis legibus bene aut perperam positum aut constitutum sit."

The branch of legislation which Mr. Smith has made choice of as the subject of his work, naturally leads me to remark a very striking contrast between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy in respect to the Wealth of Nations.* The great object of the former was to counteract the love of money and a taste for luxury, by positive institutions; and to maintain in the great body of the people, habits of frugality, and a severity of manners. The decline of states is uniformly ascribed by the philosophers and historians, both of Greece and Rome, to the influence of riches on national character; and the laws of Lycurgus, which, during a course of ages, banished the precious metals from Sparta, are proposed by many of them as the most perfect model of legislation devised by human wisdom.—How opposite to this is the doctrine of modern politicians! Far from considering poverty as an advantage to a state, their great aim is to open new sources of national opulence, and to animate the activity of all classes of the people by a taste for the comforts and accommodations of life.

* Science de la Legislation, par le Chev. Filangieri, Liv. i. chap. 13.

One principal cause of this difference between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy, may be found in the difference between the sources of national wealth in ancient and in modern times. In ages when commerce and manufactures were yet in their infancy, and among states constituted like most of the ancient republics, a sudden influx of riches from abroad was justly dreaded as an evil, alarming to the morals, to the industry, and to the freedom of a people. So different, however, is the case at present, that the most wealthy nations are those where the people are the most laborious, and where they enjoy the greatest degree of liberty. Nay, it was the general diffusion of wealth among the lower orders of men, which first gave birth to the spirit of independence in modern Europe, and which has produced under some of its governments, and especially under our own, a more equal diffusion of freedom and happiness, than took place under the most celebrated constitutions of antiquity.

Without this diffusion of wealth among the lower orders, the important effects resulting from the invention of printing would have been extremely limited; for a certain degree of ease and independence is necessary to inspire men with the desire of knowledge, and to afford them the leisure which is requisite for acquiring it; and it is only by the rewards which such a state of society holds up to industry and ambition, that the selfish passions of the multitude can be interested in the intellectual improvement of their children. The extensive propagation of light and refinement arising from the influence of the press, aided by the spirit of commerce, seems to be the remedy provided by nature, against the fatal effects which would otherwise be produced, by the subdivision of labor accompanying the progress of the mechanical arts: Nor is any thing wanting to make the remedy effectual, but wise institutions to facilitate general instruction, and to adapt the education of individuals to the stations they are to occupy. The mind of the artist, which, from the limited sphere of his activity, would sink below the level of the peasant or the savage, might receive in infancy the

means of intellectual enjoyment, and the seeds of moral improvement; and even the insipid uniformity of his professional engagements, by presenting no object to awaken his ingenuity or to distract his attention, might leave him at liberty to employ his faculties, on subjects more interesting to himself, and more extensively useful to others.

These effects, notwithstanding a variety of opposing causes which still exist, have already resulted, in a very sensible degree, from the liberal policy of modern times. Mr. Hume, in his Essay on Commerce, after taking notice of the numerous armies raised and maintained by the small republics in the ancient world, ascribes the military power of these states to their want of commerce and luxury. "Few artisans were maintained by the labor of the farmers, and therefore more soldiers might live upon it." He adds, however, that "the policy of ancient times was VIOLENT, and contrary to the NATURAL course of things;"—by which, I presume, he means, that it aimed too much at modifying, by the force of positive institutions, the order of society, according to some preconceived idea of expediency; without trusting sufficiently to those principles of the human constitution, which, wherever they are allowed free scope, not only conduct mankind to happiness, but lay the foundation of a progressive improvement in their condition and in their character. The advantages which modern policy possesses over the ancient, arise principally from its conformity, in some of the most important articles of political economy, to an order of things recommended by nature; and it would not be difficult to show, that where it remains imperfect, its errors may be traced to the restraints it imposes on the natural course of human affairs. Indeed, in these restraints may be discovered the latent seeds of many of the prejudices and follies which infect modern manners, and which have so long bid defiance to the reasonings of the philosopher and the ridicule of the satirist.

The foregoing very imperfect hints appeared to me to form, not only a proper, but in some measure a necessary introduction to the few remarks I have to

offer on Mr. Smith's Inquiry; as they tend to illustrate a connexion between his system of commercial politics, and those speculations of his earlier years, in which he aimed more professedly at the advancement of human improvement and happiness. It is this view of political economy that can alone render it interesting to the moralist, and can dignify calculations of profit and loss in the eye of the philosopher. Mr. Smith has alluded to it in various passages of his work, but he has no where explained himself fully on the subject; and the great stress he has laid on the effects of the division of labor in increasing its productive powers seems, at first sight, to point to a different and very melancholy conclusion;—that the same causes which promote the progress of the arts, tend to degrade the mind of the artist; and, of consequence, that the growth of national wealth implies a sacrifice of the character of the people.

The fundamental doctrines of Mr. Smith's system are now so generally known, that it would have been tedious to offer any recapitulation of them in this place; even if I could have hoped to do justice to the subject, within the limits which I have prescribed to myself at present. A distinct analysis of his work might indeed be useful to many readers; but it would itself form a volume of considerable magnitude. I may perhaps, at some future period, present to the Society an attempt towards such an analysis, which I began long ago, for my own satisfaction, and which I lately made considerable progress in preparing for the press, before I was aware of the impossibility of connecting it, with the general plan of this paper. In the mean time, I shall content myself with remarking, that the great and leading object of Mr. Smith's speculations is to illustrate the provision made by nature in the principles of the human mind, and in the circumstances of man's external situtution, for a gradual and progressive augmentation in the means of national wealth; and to demonstrate, that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness, is to maintain that order of things which nature has pointed out; by allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest

in his own way, and to bring both his industry and his capital into the freest competition with those of his fellow-citizens. Every system of policy which endeavours, either by extraordinary encouragements, to draw towards a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than what would naturally go to it; or, by extraordinary restraints, to force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it, is in reality, subversive of the great purpose which it means to promote.

What the circumstances are, which, in modern Europe, have contributed to disturb this order of nature, and, in particular, to encourage the industry of towns, at the expense of that of the country, Mr. Smith has investigated with great ingenuity; and in such a manner, as to throw much new light on the history of that state of society which prevails in this quarter of the globe. His observations on this subject tend to show, that these circumstances were, in their first origin, the natural and the unavoidable result of the peculiar situation of mankind during a certain period; and that they took their rise, not from any general scheme of policy, but from the private interests and prejudices of particular orders of men.

The state of society, however, which at first arose from a singular combination of accidents, has been prolonged much beyond its natural period, by a false system of political economy, propagated by merchants and manufacturers; a class of individuals, whose interest is not always the same with that of the public, and whose professional knowledge gave them many advantages, more particularly in the infancy of this branch of science, in defending those opinions which they wished to encourage. By means of this system, a new set of obstacles to the progress of national prosperity has been created. Those which arose from the disorders of the feudal ages, tended directly to disturb the internal arrangements of society, by obstructing the free circulation of labor and of stock, from employment to employment, and from place to place. The false sys-

tem of political economy which has been hitherto prevalent, as its professed object has been to regulate the commercial intercourse between different nations has produced its effect in a way less direct and less manifest, but equally prejudicial to the states that have adopted it.

On this system, as it took its rise from the prejudices, or rather from the interested views of mercantile speculators, Mr. Smith bestows the title of the Commercial or Mercantile System; and he has considered at great length its two principal expedients for enriching a nation; restraints upon importation, and encouragements to exportation. Part of these expedients, he observes, has been dictated by the spirit of monopoly, and part by a spirit of jealousy against those countries with which the balance of trade is supposed to be disadvantageous. All of them appear clearly, from his reasonings, to have a tendency unfavorable to the wealth of the nation which imposes them.—His remarks with respect to the jealousy of commerce are expressed in a tone of indignation, which he seldom assumes in his political writings.

"In this manner," says he, "the sneaking arts of underling tradesmen are erected into political maxims for the conduct of a great empire. By such maxims as these, nations have been taught that their interest consisted in beggaring all their neighbours. Each nation has been made to look with an invidious eye upon the prosperity of all the nations with which it trades, and to consider their gain as its own loss. Commerce, which ought naturally to be among nations as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship, has become the most fertile source of discord and animosity. The capricious ambition of Kings and Ministers has not, during the present and the preceding century, been more fatal to the repose of Europe, than the impertinent jealousy of merchants and manufacturers. The violence and injustice of the rulers of mankind is an ancient evil, for which perhaps the nature of human affairs can scarce admit of a remedy. But the mean rapacity, the monopolizing spirit of merchants and manufacturers, who neither are nor ought to be the rulers of mankind, though

it cannot perhaps be corrected, may very easily be prevented from disturbing the tranquillity of any body but themselves."

Such are the liberal principles which, according to Mr. Smith, ought to direct the commercial policy of nations; and of which it ought to be the great object of legislators to facilitate the establishment. In what manner the execution of the theory should be conducted in particular instances, is a question of a very different nature, and to which the answer must vary, in different countries, according to the different circumstances of the case. In a speculative work, such as Mr. Smith's, the consideration of this question did not fall properly under his general plan; but that he was abundantly aware of the danger to be apprehended from a rash application of political theories, appears not only from the general strain of his writings, but from some incidental observations which he has expressly made upon the subject. "So unfortunate," says he, in one passage, "are the effects of all the regulations of the mercantile system, that they not only introduce very dangerous disorders into the state of the body politic, but disorders which it is often difficult to remedy, without occasioning, for a time at least, still greater disorders.—In what manner, therefore, the natural system of perfect liberty and justice ought gradually to be restored, we must leave to the wisdom of future statesmen and legislators to determine." In the last edition of his Theory of Moral Sentiments, he has introduced some remarks, which have an obvious reference to the same important doctrine. The following passage seems to refer more particularly to those derangements of the social order which derive their origin from the feudal institutions:

"The man whose public spirit is prompted altogether by humanity and benevolence, will respect the established powers and privileges even of individuals, and still more of the great orders and societies into which the state is divided. Though he should consider some of them as in some measure abusive, he will content himself with moderating, what he often cannot annihilate without great violence. When he cannot conquer the

rooted prejudices of the people by reason and persuasion, he will not attempt to subdue them by force; but will religiously observe what, by Cicero, is justly called the divine maxim of Plato, never to use violence to his country no more than to his parents. He will accommodate, as well as he can, his public arrangements to the confirmed habits and prejudices of the people; and will remedy, as well as he can, the inconveniences which may flow from the want of those regulations which the people are averse to submit to. When he cannot establish the right, he will not disdain to meliorate the wrong; but like Solon, when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will endeavour to establish the best that the people can bear."

These cautions with respect to the practical application of general principles were peculiarly necessary from the author of "The Wealth of Nations;" as the unlimited freedom of trade, which it is the chief aim of his work to recommend, is extremely apt, by flattering the indolence of the statesman, to suggest to those who are invested with absolute power, the idea of carrying it into immediate execution. "Nothing is more averse to the tranquillity of a statesman," says the author of an Eloge on the Administration of Colbert, "than a spirit of moderation; because it condemns him to perpetual observation, shows him every moment the insufficiency of his wisdom, and leaves him the melancholy sense of his own imperfection; while under the shelter of a few general principles, a systematical politician enjoys a perpetual calm. By the help of one alone, that of a perfect liberty of trade, he would govern the world, and would leave human affairs to arrange themselves at pleasure, under the operation of the prejudices and the self-interest of individuals. If these run counter to each other, he gives himself no anxiety about the consequence; he insists that the result cannot be judged of till after a century or two shall have elapsed. If his contemporaries, in consequence of the disorder into which he has thrown public affairs, are scrupulous about submitting quietly to the experiment, he accuses them of impatience. They alone, and not he, are to blame

for what they have suffered; and the principle continues to be inculcated with the same zeal and the same confidence as before." These are the words of the ingenious and eloquent author of the Eloge on Colbert, which obtained the prize from the French Academy in the year 1763; a performance which, although confined and erroneous in its speculative views, abounds with just and important reflections of a practical nature. How far his remarks apply to that particular class of politicians whom he had evidently in his eye in the foregoing passage, I shall not presume to decide.

It is hardly necessary for me to add to these observations, that they do not detract in the least from the value of those political theories which attempt to delineate the principles of a perfect legislation. Such theories (as I have elsewhere observed*) ought to be considered merely as descriptions of the *ultimate* objects at which the statesman ought to aim. The tranquillity of his administration, and the immediate success of his measures, depend on his good sense and his practical skill; and his theoretical principles only enable him to direct his measures steadily and wisely, to promote the improvement and happiness of mankind, and prevent him from being ever led astray from these important ends, by more limited views of temporary expedience. "In all cases," says Mr. Hume, "it must be advantageous to know what is most perfect in the kind, that we may be able to bring any real constitution or form of government as near it as possible, by such gentle alterations and innovations as may not give too great disturbance to society."

The limits of this memoir make it impossible for me to examine particularly the merit of Mr. Smith's work in point of originality. That his doctrine concerning the freedom of trade and of industry coincides remarkably with that which we find in the writings of the French Economists, appears from the slight view of their system which he himself has given. But it surely cannot be pretended by the warmest admirers of that sys-

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Vol. I.

tem, that any one of its numerous expositors has approached to Mr. Smith in the precision and perspicuity with which he has stated it, or in the scientific and luminous manner in which he has deduced it from elementary principles. The awkwardness of their technical language, and the paradoxical form in which they have chosen to present some of their opinions, are acknowledged even by those who are most willing to do justice to their merits; whereas it may be doubted with respect to Mr. Smith's Inquiry if there exists any book beyond the circle of the mathematical and physical sciences, which is at once so agreeable in its arrangement to the rules of a sound logic, and so accessible to the examination of ordinary readers. Abstracting entirely from the author's peculiar and original speculations, I do not know, that upon any subject whatever, a work has been produced in our times, containing so methodical, so comprehensive, and so judicious a digest of all the most profound and enlightened philosophy of the age.

In justice also to Mr. Smith, it must be observed, that although some of the economical writers had the start of him in publishing their doctrines to the world, these doctrines appear, with respect to him, to have been altogether original, and the result of his own reflections. Of this, I think, every person must be convinced, who reads the Inquiry with due attention, and is at pains to examine the gradual and beautiful progress of the author's ideas: But in case any doubt should remain on this head, it may be proper to mention, that Mr. Smith's political lectures, comprehending the fundamental principles of his Inquiry, were delivered at Glasgow as early as the year 1752 or 1753; at a period, surely, when there existed no French performance on the subject, that could be of much use to him in guiding his researches.* In the year 1756, indeed, M. Turgot (who is said to have imbibed his first notions concerning the unlimited freedom of commerce from an old merchant, M. Gour-

* In proof of this, it is sufficient for me to appeal to a short history of the progress of political economy in France, published in one of the volumes of *Ephémérides du Citoyen*. See the first part of the volume for the year 1769. The paper is entitled, *Notice abrégée des différens Ecrits moderns, qui ont concouru en France à former la science de l'économie politique.*

nay) published in the *Encyclopédie*, an article which sufficiently shows how completely his mind was emancipated from the old prejudices in favor of commercial regulations: But that even then, these opinions were confined to a few speculative men in France, appears from a passage in the *Mémoires sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de* M. Turgot; in which, after a short quotation from the article just mentioned, the author adds: "These ideas were *then* considered as paradoxical; they are since become common, and they will one day be adopted universally."

The Political Discourses of Mr. Hume were evidently of greater use to Mr. Smith, than any other book that had appeared prior to his lectures. Even Mr. Hume's theories, however, though always plausible and ingenious, and in most instances profound and just, involve some fundamental mistakes; and, when compared with Mr. Smith's, afford a striking proof, that, in considering a subject so extensive and so complicated, the most penetrating sagacity, if directed only to particular questions, is apt to be led astray by first appearances; and that nothing can guard us effectually against error, but a comprehensive survey of the whole field of discussion, assisted by an accurate and patient analysis of the ideas about which our reasonings are employed.—It may be worth while to add, that Mr. Hume's Essay "on the Jealousy of Trade," with some other of his Political Discourses, received a very flattering proof of M. Turgot's approbation, by his undertaking the task of translating them into the French language.

I am aware that the evidence I have hitherto produced of Mr. Smith's originality may be objected to as not perfectly decisive, as it rests entirely on the recollection of those students who attended his first courses of moral philosophy at Glasgow; a recollection which, at the distance of forty years, cannot be supposed to be very accurate. There exists however fortunately, a short manuscript drawn up by Mr. Smith in the year 1755, and presented by him to a society of which he was then a member; in which paper, a pretty long enumeration is given of certain leading principles, both politi-

cal and literary, to which he was anxious to establish his exclusive right; in order to prevent the possibility of some rival claims which he thought he had reason to apprehend, and to which his situation as a Professor, added to his unreserved communication in private companies, rendered him peculiarly liable. This paper is at present in my possession. It is expressed with a good deal of that honest and indignant warmth, which is perhaps unavoidable by a man who is conscious of the purity of his own intentions, when he suspects that advantages have been taken of the frankness of his temper. On such occasions, due allowances are not always made for those plagiarisms which, however cruel in their effects, do not necessarily imply bad faith in those who are guilty of them; for the bulk of mankind, incapable themselves of original thought, are perfectly unable to form a conception of the nature of the injury done to a man of inventive genius, by encroaching on a favorite speculation. For reasons known to some members of this Society, it would be improper, by the publication of this manuscript, to revive the memory of private differences; and I should not have even alluded to it, if I did not think it a valuable document of the progress of Mr. Smith's political ideas at a very early period. Many of the most important opinions in *The Wealth of Nations* are there detailed; but I shall quote only the following sentences: "Man is generally considered by statesmen and projectors as the materials of a sort of politcal mechanics. Projectors disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs; and it requires no more than to let her alone, and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends, that she may establish her own designs."—And in another passage: "Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things. All governments which thwart this natural course, which force things into another channel, or which endeavour to arrest the progress of society at a particular point, are unnatural, and to support them-

selves are obliged to be oppressive and tyrannical.—A great part of the opinions," he observes, "enumerated in this paper, is treated of at length in some lectures which I have still by me, and which were written in the hand of a clerk who left my service six years ago. They have all of them been the constant subjects of my lectures since I first taught Mr. Craigie's class, the first winter I spent in Glasgow, down to this day, without any considerable variation. They had all of them been the subjects of lectures which I read at Edinburgh the winter before I left it, and I can adduce innumerable witnesses, both from that place and from this, who will ascertain them sufficiently to be mine."

After all, perhaps the merit of such a work as Mr. Smith's is to be estimated less from the novelty of the principles it contains, than from the reasonings employed to support these principles, and from the scientific manner in which they are unfolded in their proper order and connexion. General assertions with respect to the advantages of a free commerce, may be collected from various writers of an early date. But in questions of so complicated a nature as occur in political economy, the credit of such opinions belongs of right to the author who first established their solidity, and followed them out to their remote consequences; not to him who, by a fortunate accident, first stumbled on the truth.

Besides the principles which Mr. Smith considered as more peculiarly his own, his Inquiry exhibits a systematical view of the most important articles of political economy, so as to serve the purpose of an elementary treatise on that very extensive and difficult science. The skill and the comprehensiveness of mind displayed in his arrangement, can be judged of by those alone who have compared it with that adopted by his immediate predecessors. And perhaps, in point of utility, the labor he has employed in connecting and methodizing their scattered ideas, is not less valuable than the results of his own original speculations: For it is only when digested in a clear and natural order, that truths make their proper impression on the mind, and that erroneous opinions can be combated with success.

It does not belong to my present undertaking, (even if I were qualified for such a task,) to attempt the separation of the solid and important doctrines of Mr. Smith's book from those opinions which appear exceptionable or doubtful. I acknowledge, that there are some of his conclusions to which I would not be understood to subscribe implicitly; more particularly in that chapter, where he treats of the principles of taxation, and which is certainly executed in a manner more loose and unsatisfactory than the other parts of his system.

It would be improper for me to conclude this section without taking notice of the manly and dignified freedom with which the author uniformly delivers his opinions, and of the superiority which he discovers throughout, to all the little passions connected with the factions of the times in which he wrote. Whoever takes the trouble to compare the general tone of his composition with the period of its first publication, cannot fail to feel and acknowledge the force of this remark.——It is not often that a disinterested zeal for truth has so soon met with its just reward. Philosophers (to use an expression of Lord Bacon's,) are "the servants of posterity;" and most of those who have devoted their talents to the best interests of mankind, have been obliged, like Bacon, to "bequeath their fame" to a race yet unborn, and to console themselves with the idea of sowing what another generation was to reap:

"Insere, Daphni, pyros; carpent tua poma nepotes."

Mr. Smith was more fortunate; or rather, in this respect, his fortune was singular. He survived the publication of his work only fifteen years; and yet, during that short period, he had not only the satisfaction of seeing the opposition it at first excited, gradually subside, but to witness the practical influence of his writings on the commercial policy of his country.

SECTION V.

Conclusion of the Narrative.

About two years after the publication of "The Wealth of Nations," Mr. Smith was appointed one of the Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs in Scotland; a preferment which, in his estimation, derived an additional value from its being bestowed on him at the request of the Duke of Buccleugh. The greater part of these two years he passed at London, in a society too extensive and varied to afford him any opportunity of indulging his taste for study. His time, however, was not lost to himself; for much of it was spent with some of the first names in English literature. Of these no unfavorable specimen is preserved by Dr. Barnard, in his well known "Verses addressed to Sir Joshua Reynolds and his friends."

> If I have thoughts, and can't express 'em,
> Gibbon shall teach me how to dress 'em
> In words select and terse:
> Jones teach me modesty and Greek,
> Smith how to think, Burke how to speak,
> And Beauclerc to converse.*

In consequence of Mr. Smith's appointment to the Board of Customs, he removed, in 1778, to Edinburgh, where he spent the last twelve years of his life; enjoying an affluence which was more than equal to all his wants; and, what was to him of still greater value, the prospect of passing the remainder of his days among the companions of his youth.

His mother, who, though now in extreme old age, still possessed a considerable degree of health, and retained all her faculties unimpaired, accompanied him to town; and his cousin, Miss Jane Douglas, (who had formerly been a member of his family at Glasgow, and for whom he had always felt the affection of a brother,) while she divided with him those tender attentions which her aunt's infirmities required, relieved him of a

* See Annual Register for the year 1776.

charge for which he was peculiarly ill qualified, by her friendly superintendence of his domestic economy.

The accession to his income which his new office brought him, enabled him to gratify, to a much greater extent than his former circumstances admitted of, the natural generosity of his disposition; and the state of his funds at the time of his death, compared with his very moderate establishment, confirmed, beyond a doubt, what his intimate acquaintances had often suspected, that a large proportion of his annual savings was allotted to offices of secret charity. A small, but excellent library, which he had gradually formed with great judgment in the selection; and a simple, though hospitable table, where, without the formality of an invitation, he was always happy to receive his friends, were the only expenses that could be considered as his own.*

The change in his habits which his removal to Edinburgh produced, was not equally favorable to his literary pursuits. The duties of his office, though they required but little exertion of thought, were yet sufficient to waste his spirits and to dissipate his attention; and now that his career is closed, it is impossible to reflect on the time they consumed, without lamenting, that it had not been employed in labors more profitable to the world, and more equal to his mind.

During the first years of his residence in this city, his studies seemed to be entirely suspended; and his passion for letters served only to amuse his leisure, and to animate his conversation. The infirmities of age, of which he very early began to feel the approaches, reminded him at last, when it was too late, of what he yet owed to the public, and to his own fame. The principal materials of the works which he had announced, had been long ago collected; and little probably was wanting, but a few years of health and retirement, to

* Some very affecting instances of Mr. Smith's beneficence, in cases where he found it impossible to conceal entirely his good offices, have been mentioned to me by a near relation of his, and one of his most confidential friends, Miss Ross, daughter of the late Patrick Ross, Esq. of Innernethy. They were all on a scale much beyond what might have been expected from his fortune; and were accompanied with circumstances equally honorable to the delicacy of his feelings and the liberality of his heart.

bestow on them that systematical arrangement in which he delighted; and the ornaments of that flowing, and apparently artless style, which he had studiously cultivated, but which, after all his experience in composition, he adjusted, with extreme difficulty, to his own taste.*

The death of his mother in 1784, which was followed by that of Miss Douglas in 1788, contributed, it is probable, to frustrate these projects. They had been the objects of his affection for more than sixty years; and in their society he had enjoyed, from his infancy, all that he ever knew of the endearments of a family. He was now alone, and helpless; and, though he bore his loss with equanimity, and regained apparently his former cheerfulness, yet his health and strength gradually declined till the period of his death, which happened in July 1790, about two years after that of his cousin, and six after that of his mother. His last illness, which arose from a chronic obstruction in his bowels, was lingering and painful; but had every consolation to soothe it which he could derive from the tenderest sympathy of his friends, and from the complete resignation of his own mind.

A few days before his death, finding his end approach rapidly, he gave orders to destroy all his manuscripts, excepting some detached essays, which he entrusted to the care of his executors; and they were accordingly committed to the flames. What were the particular contents of these papers, is not known even to his most intimate friends; but there can be no doubt that they consisted, in part, of the lectures on rhetoric, which he read at Edinburgh in the year 1748, and of the lectures on natural religion and on jurisprudence, which formed part of his course at Glasgow.

* Mr. Smith observed to me, not long before his death, that after all his practice in writing, he composed as slowly, and with as great difficulty, as at first. He added, at the same time, that Mr. Hume had acquired so great a facility in this respect, that the last volumes of his History were printed from his original copy, with a few marginal corrections.

It may gratify the curiosity of some readers to know, that when Mr. Smith was employed in composition, he generally walked up and down his apartment, dictating to a secretary. All Mr. Hume's works (I have been assured) were written with his own hand. A critical reader may, I think, perceive in the different styles of these two classical writers, the effects of their different modes of study.

That this irreparable injury to letters proceeded, in some degree, from an excessive solicitude in the author about his posthumous reputation, may perhaps be true; but with respect to some of his manuscripts, may we not suppose that he was influenced by higher motives? It is but seldom that a philosopher, who has been occupied from his youth with moral or with political inquiries, succeeds completely to his wish in stating to others, the grounds upon which his own opinions are founded; and hence it is, that the known principles of an individual, who has approved to the public his candor, his liberality, and his judgment, are entitled to a weight and an authority, independent of the evidence which he is able, upon any particular occasion, to produce in their support. A secret consciousness of this circumstance, and an apprehension, that by not doing justice to an important argument, the progress of truth may be rather retarded than advanced, have probably induced many authors to withhold from the world the unfinished results of their most valuable labors; and to content themselves with giving the general sanction of their suffrages to truths which they regarded as peculiarly interesting to the human race.*

---

* Since writing the above, I have been favored by Dr. Hutton with the following particulars.

"Some time before his last illness, when Mr. Smith had occasion to go to London, he enjoined his friends, to whom he had entrusted the disposal of his manuscripts, that in the event of his death, they should destroy all the volumes of his lectures, doing with the rest of his manuscripts what they pleased. When now he had become weak, and saw the approaching period of his life, he spoke to his friends again upon the same subject. They entreated him to make his mind easy, as he might depend upon their fulfilling his desire. He was then satisfied. But some days afterwards, finding his anxiety not entirely removed, he begged one of them to destroy the volumes immediately. This accordingly was done; and his mind was so much relieved, that he was able to receive his friends in the evening with his usual complacency.

"They had been in use to sup with him every Sunday; and that evening there was a pretty numerous meeting of them. Mr. Smith not finding himself able to sit up with them as usual, retired to bed before supper; and, as he went away, took leave of his friends by saying, 'I believe we must adjourn this meeting to some other place.' He died a very few days afterwards."

Mr. Riddell, an intimate friend of Mr. Smith's, who was present at one of the conversations on the subject of the manuscripts, mentioned to me, in addition to Dr. Hutton's note, that Mr. Smith regretted, "he had done so little." "But I meant," said he, "to have done more; and there are materials in my papers of which I could have made a great deal. But that is now out of the question."

That the idea of destroying such unfinished works as might be in his possession at the time of his death, was not the effect of any sudden or hasty resolution, appears from the following letter to Mr. Hume, written by Mr. Smith in 1773, at a time when he was preparing himself for a journey to London, with the prospect of a pretty long absence from Scotland.

The additions to the Theory of Moral Sentiments, most of which were composed under severe disease, had fortunately been sent to the press in the beginning of the preceding winter; and the author lived to see the publication of the work. The moral and serious strain that prevails through these additions, when connected with the circumstance of his declining health, adds a peculiar charm to his pathetic eloquence, and communicates a new interest, if possible, to those sublime truths, which, in the academical retirement of his youth, awakened the first ardors of his genius, and on which the last efforts of his mind reposed.

In a letter addressed, in the year 1787, to the Principal of the University of Glasgow, in consequence of being elected Rector of that learned body, a pleasing memorial remains of the satisfaction with which he always recollected that period of his literary career, which had been more peculiarly consecrated to these important studies. "No preferment," says he, "could have given me so much real satisfaction. No man can owe greater obligations to a society than I do to the University of Glasgow. They educated me; they sent me to Oxford. Soon after my return to Scotland, they elected me one of their own members; and afterwards preferred me to another office, to which the abilities and virtues of the never to be forgotten Dr. Hutcheson had given a superior degree of illustration. The period of thirteen years which I spent as a member of that society, I remember as by far the most useful, and therefore as by far the

---

MY DEAR FRIEND. Edinburgh, 16th April, 1773.

As I have left the care of all my literary papers to you, I must tell you, that except those which I carry along with me, there are none worth the publication, but a fragment of a great work, which contains a history of the astronomical systems that were successively in fashion down to the time of Descartes. Whether that might not be published as a fragment of an intended juvenile work, I leave entirely to your judgment, though I begin to suspect myself that there is more refinement than solidity in some parts of it. This little work you will find in a thin folio paper book in my back room. All the other loose papers which you will find in that desk, or within the glass folding doors of a bureau which stands in my bed-room, together with about eighteen thin paper folio books, which you will likewise find within the same glass folding doors, I desire may be destroyed without any examination. Unless I die very suddenly, I shall take care that the papers I carry with me shall be carefully sent to you.

I ever am, my dear Friend, most faithfully your's,

ADAM SMITH.

TO DAVID HUME, Esq.
St. Andrew's Square.

happiest and most honorable period of my life; and now, after three and twenty years absence, to be remembered in so very agreeable a manner by my old friends and protectors, gives me a heart-felt joy which I cannot easily express to you."

The short narrative which I have now finished, however barren of incident, may convey a general idea of the genius and character of this illustrious man. Of the intellectual gifts and attainments by which he was so eminently distinguished;—of the originality and comprehensiveness of his views; the extent, the variety, and the correctness of his information; the inexhaustible fertility of his invention; and the ornaments which his rich and beautiful imagination had borrowed from classical culture;—he has left behind him lasting monuments. To his private worth the most certain of all testimonies may be found in that confidence, respect, and attachment, which followed him through all the various relations of life. The serenity and gaiety he enjoyed, under the pressure of his growing infirmities, and the warm interest he felt to the last, in every thing connected with the welfare of his friends, will be long remembered by a small circle, with whom, as long as his strength permitted, he regularly spent an evening in the week; and to whom the recollection of his worth still forms a pleasing, though melancholy bond of union.

The more delicate and characteristical features of his mind, it is perhaps impossible to trace. That there were many peculiarities, both in his manners, and in his intellectual habits, was manifest to the most superficial observer; but although, to those who knew him, these peculiarities detracted nothing from the respect which his abilities commanded; and although, to his intimate friends, they added an inexpressible charm to his conversation, while they displayed, in the most interesting light, the artless simplicity of his heart; yet it would require a very skilful pencil to present them to the public eye. He was certainly not fitted for the general commerce of the world, or for the business of active life. The comprehensive speculations with which he had been occupied from his youth, and the variety of

materials which his own invention continually supplied to his thoughts, rendered him habitually inattentive to familiar objects, and to common occurrences; and he frequently exhibited instances of absence, which have scarcely been surpassed by the fancy of La Bruyère. Even in company, he was apt to be ingrossed with his studies; and appeared, at times, by the motion of his lips, as well as by his looks and gestures, to be in the fervor of composition. I have often, however, been struck, at the distance of years, with his accurate memory of the most trifling particulars; and am inclined to believe, from this and some other circumstances, that he possessed a power, not perhaps uncommon among absent men, of recollecting, in consequence of subsequent efforts of reflection, many occurrences which, at the time when they happened, did not seem to have sensibly attracted his notice.

To the defect now mentioned, it was probably owing, in part, that he did not fall in easily with the common dialogue of conversation, and that he was somewhat apt to convey his own ideas in the form of a lecture. When he did so, however, it never proceeded from a wish to ingross the discourse, or to gratify his vanity. His own inclination disposed him so strongly to enjoy in silence the gaiety of those around him, that his friends were often led to concert little schemes, in order to bring him on the subjects most likely to interest him. Nor do I think I shall be accused of going too far, when I say, that he was scarcely ever known to start a new topic himself, or to appear unprepared upon those topics that were introduced by others. Indeed, his conversation was never more amusing than when he gave a loose to his genius, upon the very few branches of knowledge of which he only possessed the outlines.

The opinions he formed of men, upon a slight acquaintance, were frequently erroneous; but the tendency of his nature inclined him much more to blind partiality, than to ill-founded prejudice. The enlarged views of human affairs, on which his mind habitually dwelt, left him neither time nor inclination to study, in detail, the uninteresting peculiarities of ordinary characters;

and accordingly, though intimately acquainted with the capacities of the intellect, and the workings of the heart, and accustomed, in his theories, to mark, with the most delicate hand, the nicest shades, both of genius and of the passions; yet, in judging of individuals, it sometimes happened, that his estimates were, in a surprising degree, wide of the truth.

The opinions, too, which, in the thoughtlessness and confidence of his social hours, he was accustomed to hazard on books, and on questions of speculation, were not uniformly such as might have been expected from the superiority of his understanding, and the singular consistency of his philosophical principles. They were liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances, and by the humor of the moment; and when retailed by those who only saw him occasionally, suggested false and contradictory ideas of his real sentiments. On these, however, as on most other occasions, there was always much truth, as well as ingenuity, in his remarks; and if the different opinions which, at different times, he pronounced upon the same subject, had been all combined together, so as to modify and limit each other, they would probably have afforded materials for a decision, equally comprehensive and just. But, in the society of his friends, he had no disposition to form those qualified conclusions that we admire in his writings; and he generally contented himself with a bold and masterly sketch of the object, from the first point of view in which his temper, or his fancy, presented it. Something of the same kind might be remarked, when he attempted, in the flow of his spirits, to delineate those characters which, from long intimacy, he might have been supposed to understand thoroughly. The picture was always lively, and expressive; and commonly bore a strong and amusing resemblance to the original, when viewed under one particular aspect; but seldom, perhaps, conveyed a just and complete conception of it in all its dimensions and proportions.—In a word, it was the fault of his unpremeditated judgments, to be too systematical, and too much in extremes.

But, in whatever way these trifling peculiarities in his

manners may be explained, there can be no doubt, that they were intimately connected with the genuine artlessness of his mind. In this amiable quality, he often recalled to his friends, the accounts that are given of good La Fontaine; a quality which in him derived a peculiar grace from the singularity of its combination with those powers of reason and of eloquence which, in his political and moral writings, have long engaged the admiration of Europe.

In his external form and appearance, there was nothing uncommon. When perfectly at ease, and when warmed with conversation, his gestures were animated, and not ungraceful; and, in the society of those he loved, his features were often brightened with a smile of inexpressible benignity. In the company of strangers, his tendency to absence, and perhaps still more his consciousness of this tendency, rendered his manner somewhat embarrassed; an effect which was probably not a little heightened by those speculative ideas of propriety, which his recluse habits tended at once to perfect in his conception, and to diminish his power of realizing. He never sat for his picture; but the medallion of Tassie conveys an exact idea of his profile, and of the general expression of his countenance.

The valuable library that he had collected he bequeathed, together with the rest of his property, to his cousin, Mr. David Douglas, Advocate. In the education of this young gentleman, he had employed much of his leisure; and it was only two years before his death, (at a time when he could ill spare the pleasure of his society,) that he had sent him to study law at Glasgow, under the care of Mr. Millar;—the strongest proof he could give of his disinterested zeal for the improvement of his friend, as well as of the esteem in which he held the abilities of that eminent Professor.

The executors of his will were Dr. Black and Dr. Hutton; with whom he had long lived in habits of the most intimate and cordial friendship; and who, to the many other testimonies which they had given him of their affection, added the mournful office of witnessing his last moments.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D. D.

The principal authorities for the biographical details in the following pages were communicated to me by Dr. Robertson's eldest son, Mr. William Robertson, Advocate. To him I am indebted, not only for the original letters with which he has enabled me to gratify the curiosity of my readers, but for every other aid which he could be prompted to contribute, either by regard for his father's memory, or by friendship for myself.

My information with respect to the earlier part of Dr. Robertson's life was derived almost entirely from one of his oldest and most valued friends, the Rev. Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk.

It is proper for me to add, that this memoir was read at different meetings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

During the long interval which has elapsed since it was composed, a few sentences have been occasionally inserted, in which a reference is made to later criticisms on Dr. Robertson's writings. I mention this circumstance, in order to account for some slight anachronisms.

DUGALD STEWART.

COLLEGE OF EDINBURGH,
16th May, 1801.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D. D.

SECTION I.

From Dr. Robertson's Birth till the Publication of his History of Scotland.

William Robertson, D. D. late principal of the University of Edinburgh, and historiographer to his majesty for Scotland, was the son of the Reverend William Robertson, minister of the old Gray-Friar's church, and of Eleanor Pitcairn, daughter of David Pitcairn, Esq. of Dreghorn. By his father he was descended from the Robertsons of Gladney in the county of Fife; a branch of the respectable family of the same name, which has, for many generations, possessed the estate of Struan in Perthshire.

He was born in 1721, at Borthwick (in the county of Mid-Lothian) where his father was then minister; and received the first rudiments of his education at the school of Dalkeith, which, from the high reputation of Mr. Leslie as a teacher, was at that time resorted to from all parts of Scotland. In the year 1733, he again joined his father's family on their removal to Edinburgh; and, towards the end of the same year, he entered on his course of academical study.

From this period till the year 1759, when, by the

publication of his Scottish History, he fixed anew era in the literary annals of his country, the habits and occurrences of his life were such as to supply few materials for biography; and the imagination is left to fill up a long interval spent in the silent pursuit of letters, and enlivened by the secret anticipation of future eminence. His genius was not of that forward and irregular growth, which forces itself prematurely on public notice; and it was only a few intimate and discerning friends, who, in the native vigor of his powers, and in the patient culture by which he labored to improve them, perceived the earnests of a fame that was to last for ever.

The large proportion of Dr. Robertson's life which he thus devoted to obscurity will appear the more remarkable, when contrasted with his early and enthusiastic love of study. Some of his oldest common-place books, still in his son's possession, (dated in the years 1735, 1736, and 1737) bear marks of persevering assiduity, unexampled perhaps at so tender an age; and the motto prefixed to all of them, (*Vita sine literis mors est,*) attests how soon those views and sentiments were formed, which, to his latest hour, continued to guide and dignify his ambition. In times such as the present, when literary distinction leads to other rewards, the labors of the studious are often promoted by motives very different from the hope of fame, or the inspiration of genius; but when Dr. Robertson's career commenced, these were the only incitements which existed to animate his exertions. The trade of authorship was unknown in Scotland; and the rank which that country had early acquired among the learned nations of Europe, had, for many years, been sustained entirely by a small number of eminent men, who distinguished themselves by an honorable and disinterested zeal in the ungainful walks of abstract science.

Some presages, however, of better times were beginning to appear. The productions of Thomson and of Mallet were already known and admired in the metropolis of England, and an impulse had been given to the minds of the rising generation, by the exertions of a few able and enlightened men, who filled important sta-

tions in the Scottish universities. Dr. Hutcheson of of Glasgow, by his excellent writings, and still more by his eloquent lectures, had diffused among a numerous race of pupils, a liberality of sentiment, and a refinement of taste unknown before in this part of the island; and the influence of his example had extended, in no inconsiderable degree, to that seminary where Dr. Robertson received his education. The professorship of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh was then held by Sir John Pringle, afterwards president of the Royal Society of London; who, if he did not rival Dr. Hutcheson's abilities, was not surpassed by him in the variety of his scientific attainments, or in a warm zeal for the encouragement of useful knowledge. His efforts were ably seconded by the learning and industry of Dr. Stevenson, Professor of Logic; to whose valuable prelections (particularly to his illustrations of Aristotle's Poetics and of Longinus on the Sublime) Dr. Robertson has been often heard to say, that he considered himself as more deeply indebted, than to any other circumstance in his academical studies. The bent of his genius did not incline him to mathematical or physical pursuits, notwithstanding the strong recommendations they derived from the popular talents of Mr. Maclaurin; but he could not fail to receive advantage from the eloquence with which that illustrious man knew how to adorn the most abstracted subjects, as well as from that correctness and purity in his compositions, which still entitle him to a high rank among our best writers, and which no Scottish author of the same period had been able to attain.

A number of other learned and respectable men, of whose names the greater part now exist in tradition only, were then resident in Edinburgh. A club* or society of these, carried on for some years a private correspondence with Dr. Berkeley, the celebrated bishop of Cloyne, on the subject of his metaphysical publications; and are said to have been numbered by him among

* Called the *Rankenian* Club, from the name of the person in whose tavern its meetings were held. The learned and ingenious Dr. Wallace, author of the Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind, was one of the leading members.

the few who completely comprehended the scope of his reasonings against the existence of *matter*. The influence of this society in diffusing that spirit of philosophical research which has since become so fashionable in Scotland, has often been mentioned to me by those who had the best opportunities of observing the rise and progress of Scottish literature.

I have entered into these details, partly as they suggest some circumstances which conspired with Dr. Robertson's natural inclination in fixing his studious habits; and partly as they help to account for the sudden transition which Scotland made, about this period, from the temporary obscurity into which it had sunk, to that station which it has since maintained in the republic of letters. A great stock both of genius and of learning existed in the country; but the difficulty of overcoming the peculiarities of a provincial idiom seemed to shut up every avenue to fame by means of the press, excepting in those departments of science where the nature of the subject is such as to dispense with the graces of composition.

Dr. Robertson's ambition was not to be checked by these obstacles; and he appears, from a very early period of life, to have employed, with much perseverance, the most effectual means for surmounting them. Among other expedients he was accustomed to exercise himself in the practice of translation; and he had even gone so far in the cultivation of this very difficult art, as to have thought seriously of preparing for the press a version of *Marcus Antoninus*, when he was anticipated by an anonymous publication at Glasgow, in the execution of his design. In making choice of this author, he was probably not a little influenced by that partiality with which (among the writings of the heathen moralists) he always regarded the remains of the Stoical philosophy.

Nor was his ambition limited to the attainment of the honors that reward the industry of the recluse student. Anxious to distinguish himself by the utility of his labors in that profession to which he had resolved to devote his talents, and looking forward, it is probable,

to the active share he was afterwards to take in the ecclesiastical policy of Scotland, he aspired to add to the art of classical composition, the powers of a persuasive and commanding speaker. With this view he united with some of his contemporaries during the last years of his attendance at college, in the formation of a society, where their object was to cultivate the study of elocution, and to prepare themselves, by the habits of extemporary discussion and debate, for conducting the business of popular assemblies. Fortunately for Dr. Robertson, he had here associates to contend with worthy of himself; among others, Dr. William M'Ghie, an ingenious young physician, afterwards well known in London; Mr. William Cleghorn, afterwards professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh; Dr. John Blair, late prebendary of Westminster; Dr. Wilkie, author of the Epigoniad; and Mr. John Home, author of the tragedy of Douglas.

His studies at the university being at length finished, Dr. Robertson was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Dalkeith in 1741, and in 1743 he was presented to the living of Gladsmuir in East Lothian by the Earl of Hopeton. The income was but inconsiderable (the whole emoluments not exceeding one hundred pounds a year:) but the preferment, such as it was, came to him at a time singularly fortunate; for not long afterwards, his father and mother died within a few hours of each other, leaving a family of six daughters and a younger son, in such circumstances as required every aid which his slender funds enabled him to bestow.

Dr. Robertson's conduct in this trying situation, while it bore the most honorable testimony to the generosity of his dispositions, and to the warmth of his affections, was strongly marked with that manly decision in his plans, and that persevering steadiness in their execution, which were characteristical features of his mind. Undeterred by the magnitude of a charge, which must have appeared fatal to the prospects that had hitherto animated his studies; and resolved to sacrifice to a sacred duty all personal considerations, he invited his father's family to Gladsmuir, and continued to educate

his sisters under his own roof, till they were settled respectably in the world. Nor did he think himself at liberty till then, to complete an union, which had been long the object of his wishes, and which may be justly numbered among the most fortunate incidents of his life. He remained single till 1751, when he married his cousn, Miss Mary Nisbet, daughter of the reverend Mr. Nisbet, one of the ministers of Edinburgh.

While he was thus engaged in the discharge of those pious offices which had devolved upon him by the sudden death of his parents, the rebellion of 1745 broke out in Scotland, and afforded him an opportunity of evincing the sincerity of that zeal for the civil and religious liberties of his country, which he had imbibed with the first principles of his education; and which afterwards, at the distance of more than forty years, when he was called on to employ his eloquence in the national commemoration of the revolution, seemed to rekindle the fires of his youth. His situation as a country clergyman, confined, indeed, his patriotic exertions within a narrow sphere; but even here, his conduct was guided by a mind superior to the scene in which he acted. On one occasion, (when the capital of Scotland was in danger of falling into the hands of the rebels) the state of public affairs appeared so critical, that he thought himself justified in laying aside, for a time, the pacific habits of his profession, and in quitting his parochial residence at Gladsmuir, to join the volunteers of Edinburgh: and when, at last, it was determined that the city should be surrendered, he was one of the small band who repaired to Haddington, and offered their services to the commander of his majesty's forces.

The duties of his sacred profession were, in the mean time, discharged with a punctuality, which secured to him the veneration and attachment of his parishioners; while the eloquence and taste that distinguished him as a preacher, drew the attention of the neighbouring clergy, and prepared the way for that influence in the church which he afterwards attained. A sermon which he preached in the year 1755 before the Society for

propagating Christian knowledge, and which was the earliest of all his publications, affords a sufficient proof of the eminence he might have attained in that species of composition, if his genius had not inclined him more strongly to other studies. This sermon, the only one he ever published, has been long ranked, in both parts of the island, among the best models of pulpit eloquence in our language. It has undergone five editions; and is well known, in some parts of the continent, in the German translation of Mr. Ebeling.

A few years before this period, he made his first appearance in the debates of the general assembly of the church of Scotland. The questions which were then agitated in that place have long ceased to be interesting; but they were highly important at the time, as they involved, not only the authority of the supreme court of ecclesiastical judicature, but the general tranquillity and good order of the country. The principles which Dr. Robertson held on these subjects, and which have, for many years past, guided the policy of the church, will again fall under our review, before the conclusion of this narrative. At present, it is sufficient to mention, that in the assembly of 1751, when he first submitted them to public discussion, they were so contrary to the prevailing ideas, that, although he enforced them with extraordinary powers of argument and eloquence, and was most ably supported by the late Sir Gilbert Elliot and Mr. Andrew Pringle, (afterwards Lord Alemoor) he was left in a very small minority; the house dividing, two hundred against eleven. The year following, by a steady perseverance in the same views, he had the satisfaction of bringing over a majority to his sentiments, and gave a beginning to that system of ecclesiastical government which it was one of the great objects of his life to carry into effect, by the most vigorous and decisive, though the most temperate and conciliatory measures. A paper which he drew up in the course of these proceedings, and which will be noticed in its proper place, explains the ground-work of the plan which he and his friends afterwards pursued.

The establishment of the Select Society * in Edinburgh in the year 1754, opened another field for the display and for the cultivation of his talents. This institution, intended partly for philosophical inquiry, and partly for the improvement of the members in public speaking, was projected by Mr. Allan Ramsay, the painter, and a few of his friends; but soon attracted so much of the public notice, that in the following year the num-

---

* The information contained in the following note, (for which I am indebted to the friendship of Dr. Carlyle) cannot fail to be acceptable to those, to whom the literary history of Scotland is an object of curiosity.

"The *Select Society* owed its rise to the ingenious Allan Ramsay, (son of the poet of that name) and was intended for philosophical inquiry, and the improvement of the members in the art of speaking. They met for the first time in the Advocate's Library, in May 1754, and consisted only of fifteen, who had been nominated and called together by Mr. Ramsay and two or three of his friends. At that meeting they formed themselves into a society, into which the members were ever after elected by ballot, and who met regularly every Friday evening, during the sittings of the court of session, both in summer and winter.

"This society continued to flourish for several years, and became so fashionable, that, in 1759, their number amounted to more than 130; which included all the *literati* of Edinburgh and its neighbourhood, and many of the nobility and gentry, who, though a few of them only took a share in the debates, thought themselves so well entertained, and instructed, that they gave punctual attendance. In this society, which remained in vigor for six or seven years, Dr. Robertson made a conspicuous figure. By his means it was, and by the appearances made by a few of his brethren, that a new lustre was thrown on their order. From the revolution, (when the church had been chiefly filled with incumbents that were ill-educated) down to this period, the clergy of the established church had always been considered in a subordinate light, and as far inferior to the members of the other learned professions, in knowledge and liberal views. But now, when compared together, on this theatre for the exhibition of talents, they were found to be entitled to at least an equal share of praise; and having been long depressed, they were, in compensation, as usual, raised full as high as they deserved. When the Select Society commenced, it was not foreseen that the History of Scotland during the reign of Mary, the tragedy of Douglas, and the Epigoniad, were to issue so soon from three gentlemen of the ecclesiastical order.

"When the society was on the decline, by the avocations of many of its most distinguished members, and the natural abatement of that ardor which is excited by novelty and emulation, it was thought proper to elect fixed presidents to preside in their turns, whose duty it was to open the question to be debated upon, that a fair field might be laid before the speakers. It was observed of Dr. Robertson, who was one of those presidents, that whereas most of the others in their previous discourses exhausted the subject so much that there was no room for debate, he gave only such brief, but artful sketches, as served to suggest ideas, without leading to a decision.

"Among the most distinguished speakers in the Select Society were Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Wedderburn, Mr. Andrew Pringle, Lord Kames, Mr. Walter Stuart, Lord Elibank, and Dr. Robertson. The honorable Charles Townshend spoke once. David Hume and Adam Smith never opened their lips.

"The society was also much obliged to Dr. Alexander Monro, senior, Sir Alexander Dick, and Mr. Patrick Murray, advocate, who, by their constant attendance and readiness on every subject, supported the debate during the first year of the establishment, when otherwise it would have gone heavily on. The same part was afterwards more ably performed by Lord Monboddo, Lord Elibank, and the Reverend William Wilkie, all of whom had the peculiar talent of supporting their paradoxical tenets by an inexhaustible fund of humor and argument."

ber of members * exceeded a hundred, including all the individuals in Edinburgh and the neighbourhood who were most distinguished by genius or by literary at-

* A printed list of the members having been accidentally preserved by Dr. Carlyle, I need make no apology for giving it a place here, as a memorial of the state of literary society in Edinburgh, forty years ago.

LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SELECT SOCIETY,
17TH OCTOBER, 1759.

Rev. John Jardine, minister in Edinburgh.
Francis Home, M. D.
Adam Smith, professor of ethics at Glasgow.
Alex. Wedderburn (now lord chancellor.)
Allan Ramsay (afterwards painter to his majesty.)
James Burnet, advocate (afterwards lord Monboddo.)
John Campbell, advocate (now lord Stonefield.)
Rev. Alex. Carlyle, minister at Inveresk.
William Johnston, advocate (now sir William Pulteney.)
James Stevenson Rogers, advocate.
David Hume.
John Swinton, advocate (afterwards lord Swinton.)
Patrick Murray, advocate.
Patrick Hume of Billy, advocate.
Alex. Stevenson, M. D.
Walter Stuart, advocate.
John Home (author of Douglas.)
Robert Alexander, merchant.
James Russell (afterwards professor of natural philosophy.)
George Cockburn, advocate.
David Clerk, M. D.
George Brown (lord Colston.)
Rev. Will. Robertson, minister in Edinburgh.
John Fletcher (now gen. Fletcher Campbell.)
Alex. Agnew, advocate.
John Hope, M. D.
Sir David Dalrymple, advocate (afterwards lord Hailes.)
Gilbert Elliot, one of the lords commissioners of the admiralty.
Sir Harry Erskine, bart.
Rev. Hugh Blair, one of the ministers of Edinburgh.
Andrew Stuart (now M. P. for Weymouth.)
Charles Fysch Palmer.
George Morrison, advocate.
Andrew Pringle (lord Alemoor.)
Alex. Monro, sen. M. D.
David Ross, advocate (now lord Ankerville.)
Right hon. Patrick lord Elibank.
Earl of Glasgow.
Sir Alex. Dick, bart.
Robert Arbuthnot (now secretary to the board of trustees for manufactures, &c.)
Adam Fairholme, merchant in Edinburgh.
Major James Edmonstone.
Charles Hamilton Gordon, advocate.
James Fergusson of Pitfour, jun. advocate.
David Kennedy, advocate (afterwards earl of Cassils.)
John Dalrymple, advocate (now baron of exchequer.)
Major Robert Murray (afterwards sir Robert Murray.)
Rev. Rob. Wallace, minister in Edinburgh.
John Gordon, advocate.
Alex. Maxwell, merchant in Edinburgh.

tainments. In the list of those who united with Mr. Ramsay in the formation of this society, we find the names of Dr. Robertson, Mr. David Hume, Mr. Adam

---

John Coutts, merchant in Edinburgh.
Will. Tod, merchant in Edinburgh.
Thomas Millar (afterwards president of the court of session.)
Robert Chalmers.
Mr. Baron Grant.
Captain James Stewart.
Sir John Stewart, advocate.
James Guthrie, merchant.
Charles Congalton, surgeon in Edinburgh.
Rev. Will. Wilkie, minister at Ratho.
John Monro, advocate.
Captain Robert Douglas.
Alex. Tait, writer in Edinburgh.
George Chalmers, merchant in Edinburgh.
Colonel Oughton (afterwards sir Adolphus Oughton.)
John Adam, architect.
Robert White, M. D.
Henry Home (lord Kaims.)
James Montgomery, advocate (now chief baron of exchequer.)
David Dalrymple, advocate (afterwards lord Westhall.)
Rev. George Kay, minister in Edinburgh.
George Muir, clerk of justiciary.
George Clerk (afterwards sir George Clerk.)
Lieut. col. Archibald Montgomery (afterwards earl of Eglinton.)
Right honorable lord Deskfoord.
Robt. Berry, advocate.
Adam Austin, M. D.
Lieut. col. Morgan.
George Drummond (lord provost of Edinburgh.)
The earl of Lauderdale.
Alex. Boswell (lord Auchinleck.)
Alex. Udney, commissioner of excise.
Rev. George Wishart, minister in Edinburgh.
Right honorable lord Belhaven.
Francis Garden, advocate (afterwards lord Gardenstone.)
David Rae, advocate (now lord justice Clerk.)
Mansfield Cordonnel, commissioner of excise.
Right honorable lord Aberdour.
John Murray of Philiphaugh, advocate.
Will. Tytler, writer to the signet (author of the vindication of Q. Mary.)
Colin Drummond, M. D.
Robert Dundas (afterwards president of the court of session.)
Stamp Brooksbanks.
Wm. Nairne, advocate (now lord Dunsinan.)
James Adam, architect.
Captain Charles Erskine.
Hugh Dalrymple, advocate (author of Rodondo.)
James Hay, surgeon.
Mr. Baron Erskine (afterwards lord Alva.)
John Clerk (author of naval tactics.)
John Mac Gowan, jun. (writer in Edinburgh.)
Earl of Galloway.
John Graham of Dougaldston.
James Carmichael, writer to the signet.
Adam Fergusson (afterwards professor of moral philosophy.)
George Drummond of Blair.
Will. Cullen, M. D.
Ilay Campbell, advocate (now president of the court of session.)

Smith, Mr. Wedderburn (now lord chancellor), Lord Kaims, Mr. John Home, Dr. Carlyle, Mr. Andrew Stuart, Sir Gilbert Elliot, and Lord Alemoor. The society subsisted in vigor for six or seven years, and produced debates, such as have not often been heard in modern assemblies; debates, where the dignity of the speakers was not lowered by the intrigues of policy, or the intemperance of faction; and where the most splendid talents that have ever adorned this country were roused to their best exertions, by the liberal and ennobling discussions of literature and philosophy. To this institution, while it lasted, Dr. Robertson contributed his most zealous support; seldom omitting an opportunity of taking a share in its business; and deriving from it an addition to his own fame, which may be easily conceived by those who are acquainted with his subsequent writings, or who have witnessed those powers of argument and illustration which, in the ecclesiastical courts, he afterwards employed so successfully, on subjects not so susceptible of the embellishments of eloquence.

In these courts, indeed, during the very period when the Select Society was contributing so much to the fame and to the improvement of Scotland, there occurred one

---

Alex. Murray, advocate (afterwards lord Henderland.)
Rev. Robert Dick.
Right honorable lord Gray.
Earl of Errol.
James Dewar, advocate.
Captain David Wedderburn.
Major James Dalrymple.
Archibald Hamilton, M. D.
Andrew Cheap.
Andrew Crosbie, advocate.
Earl of Aboyne.
Adam Fergusson, advocate (now sir Adam Fergusson.)
Earl of Selkirk.
John Turton.
Cosmo Gordon (afterwards one of the barons of exchequer.)
Right honorable lord Garlies.
Earl of Sutherland.
Captain Dougald Campbell.
Honorable George Ramsay, advocate.
Earl of Roseberry.
Earl of Cassils.
William Graham, advocate.
John Pringle of Crichton.
Right honorable Charles Townshend.
George Wallace.

subject of debate, unconnected with the ordinary details of church government, which afforded at once full scope to Dr. Robertson's powers as a speaker, and to a display of that mild and conciliatory temper, which was afterwards, for a long course of years, so honorably employed, in healing the divisions of a church torn with faction, and in smoothing the transition from the severity of puritanical manners, to habits less at variance with the genius of the times. For this important and arduous task he was fitted in an eminent degree by the happy union he exhibited in his own character, of that exemplary decency which became his order, with all the qualities that form the charm and the ornament of social life. The occurrence to which I allude more particularly at present was the flame kindled among the Scottish clergy in the year 1757, by the publication of the tragedy of Douglas, the author of which, Mr. John Home, was then minister of Athelstonford. The extraordinary merits of this performance, which is now become to Scotchmen a subject of national pride, were not sufficient to atone for so bold a departure from the austerity expected in a presbyterian divine; and the offence was not a little exasperated by the conduct of some of Mr. Home's brethren, who, partly from curiosity, and partly from a friendly wish to share in the censure bestowed on the author, were led to witness the first representation of the piece on the Edinburgh stage. In the whole course of the ecclesiastical proceedings connected with these incidents, Dr. Robertson distinguished himself by the ablest and most animated exertions in defence of his friends; and contributed greatly, by his persuasive eloquence, to the mildness of that sentence in which the prosecution at last terminated. His arguments on this occasion had, it may be presumed, the greater weight, that he had never himself entered within the walls of a play-house; a remarkable proof, among numberless others which the history of his life affords, of that scrupulous circumspection in his private conduct, which, while it added so much to his usefulness as a clergyman, was essential to his influence as the leader of a party; and which so often enabled him

to recommend successfully to others, the same candid and indulgent spirit that was congenial to his own mind.

The flattering notice these exertions drew to him from the public, and the rising influence he had already secured among his own order, would have presented to a temper less active and persevering than his, many seductions to interrupt his studies. A considerable portion of his time appears, in fact, to have been devoted, during this period of his life, to the society of his friends; but, as far as his situation enabled him to command it, it was to a society which amply compensated for its encroachment on his studious leisure, by what it added to the culture and enlargement of his mind. The improvement which, in these respects, he derived from the conversation of Patrick Lord Elibank, he often recollected in his more advanced years with peculiar pleasure; and it affords no inconsiderable proof of the penetration of that lively and accomplished nobleman, that long before the voice of the public could have given any direction to his attachments, he had selected as the companions of his social hours, the historian of Queen Mary, and the author of the tragedy of Douglas.

No seductions, however, could divert Dr. Robertson from the earliest object of his ambition; and in the midst of all his avocations, his studies had been advancing with a gradual progress. In the spring of the year which followed the debates about Mr. Home's tragedy, he went to London to concert measures for the publication of his History of Scotland: a work, of which the plan is said to have been formed soon after his settlement at Gladsmuir. It was published on the first of Febuary, 1759, and was received by the world with such unbounded applause, that before the end of that month, he was desired by his bookseller to prepare for a second edition.

From this moment the complexion of his fortune was changed. After a long struggle, in an obscure though a happy and hospitable retreat, with a narrow income and an increasing family, his prospects brightened at once. He saw independence and affluence within his reach; and flattered himself with the idea of giving a

still bolder flight to his genius, when no longer depressed by those tender anxieties which so often fall to the lot of men, whose pursuits and habits, while they heighten the endearments of domestic life, withdraw them from the paths of interest and ambition.

In venturing on a step, the success of which was to be so decisive, not only with respect to his fame, but to his future comfort, it is not surprising that he should have felt, in a more than common degree, "that anxiety and diffidence so natural to an author in delivering to the world his first performance." "The time," he observes in his preface, "which I have employed in attempting to render it worthy of the public approbation, it is perhaps prudent to conceal, till it shall be known whether that approbation is ever to be bestowed."

Among the many congratulatory letters addressed to him on this occasion, a few have been accidentally preserved; and, although the contents of some of them may not now appear very important, they still derive a certain degree of interest from the names and characters of the writers, and from the sympathetic share which a good-natured reader connot fail to take in Dr. Robertson's feelings, when he perceived the first dawning of his future fame.

In the extracts, however, which I mean at present to produce from these letters, my principal object is to show, how very strong an impression was made on the public mind by this work at the time of its first appearance. It was then regarded as an attempt towards a species of composition that had been cultivated with very little success in this island; and accordingly it entitles the author, not merely to the praise which would now be due to an historian of equal eminence, but to a high rank among those original and leading minds that form and guide the taste of a nation. In this view, a just estimate of its peculiar merits is more likely to be collected from the testimony of such as could compare it only with the productions of former writers, than from the opinions of critics familiarized in early life to all that has since been done to imitate or to rival its beauties.

A letter from Mr. Horace Walpole, to whom some specimens of the work had been communicated during the author's visit to London, is the earliest testimony of this kind which I have found among his papers. It is dated January 18, 1759.

"I expect with impatience your book, which you are so kind as to say you have ordered for me, and for which I already give you many thanks: the specimen I saw convinces me that I do not thank you rashly. Good historians are the most scarce of all writers; and no wonder! a good style is not very common; thorough information is still more rare: and if these meet, what a chance that impartiality should be added to them! Your style, sir, I may venture to say, I saw was uncommonly good; I have reason to think your information so: and in the few times I had the pleasure of conversing with you, your good sense and candor made me conclude, that even on a subject which we are foolish enough to make *party*, you preserve your judgment unbiassed. I fear I shall not preserve mine so; the too kind acknowledgments that I frequently receive from gentlemen of your country, of the just praise that I paid to merit, will make me at least for the future not very unprejudiced. If the opinion of so trifling a writer as I am was of any consequence, it would then be worth Scotland's while to let the world know, that when my book was written I had no reason to be partial to it: but, sir, your country will trust to the merit of its natives, not to foreign testimonials, for its reputation."

This letter was followed immediately by another from Dr. Robertson's bookseller, Mr. Millar. It is dated 27th January, 1759, a few days before the publication of the book, and conveys very flattering expressions of approbation from Dr. Warburton and Mr. Garrick, to both of whom copies had been privately sent at the author's request:—expressions, which, though they cannot now add much to a reputation so solidly established, were gratifying at the time, and do honor to the candor and discernment of the writers.

"I have received," says Dr. Warburton, in a note ad-

dressed to Mr. Millar, "and read with great pleasure, the new History of Scotland, and will not wait for the judgment of the public to pronounce it a very excellent work. From the author's apparent love of civil and religious liberty, I suppose, that were it not for fear of offence (which every wise man in his situation would fear to give) he would have spoken with much more freedom of the hierarchical principles of the infant church of Scotland."

Mr. Garrick, beside writing to Millar, addressed himself directly to the author: "Upon my word, I was never more entertained in all my life; and though I read it aloud to a friend and Mrs. Garrick, I finished the three first books at two sittings. I could not help writing to Millar, and congratulating him upon this great acquisition to his literary treasures. I will assure you that there is no *love lost* (as the saying is) between you and Mrs. Garrick. She is resolved to see Scotland as soon as my affairs will permit: nor do I find her inclination in the least abated, though I read your *Second Book* (in which her religion is so exquisitely handled) with all the malevolent exertion I was master of—but it would not do; she thinks you right even in that, and still resolves to see Scotland. In short, if she can give up the Pope and his trumpery so readily to you, what must her poor husband think? I shall keep in England, I assure you; for you have convinced me how difficult it is to contend with the Scots in their own country."

These agreeable anticipations of the public voice were in a few weeks, fully confirmed by a letter from Mr. Strahan, late printer to his majesty, and a partner of Mr. Millar's in the property of the book. It is the oldest letter of Mr. Strahan's that I have observed among Dr. Robertson's papers. Many were afterwards written, in the course of a correspondence which continued twenty years, and which Dr. Robertson always mentioned with much pleasure, and with the strongest testimonies to the worth, the liberality, and the discernment of his friend. The concluding sentences express strongly the opinion which this very competent judge had pre-

viously formed of the probable reception of a History of Scotland.

—— "I most sincerely wish you joy of your success, and have not the least doubt but it will have all the good effects upon your future fortune which you could possibly hope for or expect. Much depended on the first performance: that trial is now happily over, and henceforth you will sail with a favorable gale. In truth, to acquire such a flood of approbation from writing on a subject in itself so unpopular in this country, is neither a common nor a contemptible conquest." *

---

*FROM WM. STRAHAN, Esq. TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Rev. Sir, London, Feb. 28, 1759.

"When I received your farewell letter on the conclusion of your History, I was determined not to answer it till I could tell you, with certainty, and from my own personal knowledge, what reception it met with in this place. And what I am going to tell you I dare say you have had from many of your friends long ago. No matter for that. Every man, and especially one in my way, has an opportunity to hear the public sentiments through many different channels. I have now waited till I could be fully informed; and as I have been particularly solicitous to procure authentic intelligence, you will not be displeased at my confirming what you have heard before, as we love to see a piece of good news in the Gazette (excuse the vanity of the comparison) even though we have read it a month before in all the other papers. I don't remember to have heard any book so universally approved by the best judges; for what are sold yet have been only to such. The people in the country know nothing of it, unless from the advertisements; and *a History of Scotland* is no very enticing title. But many of the first distinction in town have perused it with great satisfaction. They wonder how a Scotch parson, and who had never been out of Scotland, could be able to write in so correct, so clear, so manly, and so nervous a style. The speaker of the house of commons, in particular, prefers the style to that of Bolingbroke, and every body that I have either seen or heard of, think it one of the very best performances that has been exhibited for many years. As these are not superficial judges, you may be assured that the fame you have acquired will be permanent, and not only permanent, but extending daily. Next week you will see some extracts from it in the Chronicle, which will serve to give the people at a distance from town some idea of its excellence; but without that, or any thing else, the report of those who have read it in London, will soon spread its reputation; for the capital always gives the lead in this way as well as in most other cases. The impression, therefore, certainly will be gone before another can be got ready. Mr. Millar has wrote to you already about revising it for another edition, and I think the sooner you send up some of the sheets, the better, that no time may be lost. Does not this answer your most sanguine expectations? For indeed, a more favorable reception could not be hoped for. I most sincerely wish you joy of your success, and have not the least doubt but it will have all the good effects upon your future fortunes which you could possibly hope for, or expect. Much depended upon the first performance; that trial is now happily over, and hence forth you will sail with a favorable gale. In truth, to acquire such a flood of reputation from writing on a subject in itself so unpopular in this country is neither a common, nor a contemptible conquest. I will not trouble you more on a subject of which you must needs have heard a great deal from hence lately. I rejoice in your good fortune, and am with much esteem and sincerity,

Dear Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
WILL. STRAHAN."

By the kindness of Mr. Strahan's son* I am enabled to quote the following passage from Dr. Robertson's answer to the foregoing letter:

"When we took leave, on finishing the printing of my book, I had no expectation that it was so soon to come through your hands a second time. The rapidity of its success has not surprised any man more than the author of it. I do not affect to think worse of it than is natural for him who made it; and I never was much afraid of the subject, which is interesting to the English as well as Scots; but a much more moderate success was all I looked for. However, since it has so far outgone my hopes, I enjoy it. I have flattered nobody in order to obtain it, and I have not spared to speak truth of all factions and sects."

It would be tedious and useless to transcribe the complimentary passages which occur in various other letters from the author's friends. Lord Royston, the late Sir Gilbert Elliot, Dr. Birch, Dr. Douglas, (now bishop of Salisbury,) and Dr. John Blair, (late prebendary of Westminster,) were among the first to perceive and to predict the extent of that reputation he was about to establish. A few passages from the letters addressed to him by Mr. Walpole and Mr. David Hume, as they enter more into detail concerning his merits as a writer, may, I think, be introduced into this memoir without impropriety.

The following letter from Mr. Strahan's son, forms an interesting counterpart to the foregoing article.

FROM ANDREW STRAHAN, Esq. TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Dear Sir, London, 19th November, 1792.

"Being at the sea-side in Sussex when I received your favor of the 26th ult. I have had no opportunity till now of acknowledging it, and at the same time informing myself of the state of the edition, so as to answer your question.

"Mr. Cadell, who is now with me, and who desires to be affectionately remembered, is of opinion with me, that we should take the ensuing season of ships sailing to India to reduce the quartos. But we will print an edition in octavo, next summer, whatever may then be the state of the former, and we will thank you for a correct copy at your leisure.

"The fourteenth edition of your "*Scotland*" will be published in the course of the winter, during which it is our intention to advertise all your works strongly in all the papers. And we have the satisfaction of informing you, that if we may judge by the sale of your writings, your literary reputation is daily increasing.

I am, with much esteem," &c.

* Andrew Strahan, Esq. M. P.

"Having finished," says Mr. Walpole, "the first volume, and made a little progress in the second, I cannot stay till I have finished the latter to tell you how exceedingly I admire the work. Your modesty will make you perhaps suppose these are words of compliment and of course; but as I can give you very good reasons for my approbation, you may believe that I no more flatter your performance, than I have read it superficially, hastily, or carelessly.

"The style is most pure, proper, and equal; is very natural and easy, except now and then where, as I may justly call it, you are forced to *translate* from bad writers. You will agree with me, sir, that an historian, who writes from other authorities, cannot possibly always have as flowing a style as an author, whose narrative is dictated from his own knowledge. Your perspicuity is most beautiful, your relation always interesting, never languid; and you have very extraordinarily united two merits very difficult to be reconciled; I mean, that, though you have formed your history into pieces of information, each of which would make a separate memoir, yet the whole is hurried on into one uninterrupted story. I assure you I value myself on the first distinction, especially as Mr. Charles Townshend made the same remark. You have preserved the gravity of history without any formality, and you have at the same time avoided what I am now running into, antithesis and conceit. In short, sir, I don't know where or what history is written with more excellencies:—and when I say this, you may be sure, I do not forget your impartiality. But, sir, I will not wound your bashfulness with more encomiums; yet the public will force you to hear them. I never knew justice so rapidly paid to a work of so deep and serious a kind; for deep it is, and it must be great sense that could penetrate so far into human nature, considering how little you have been conversant with the world."

The long and uninterrupted friendship which subsisted between Dr. Robertson and Mr. Hume is well known; and it is certainly a circumstance highly honorable to both, when we consider the wide diversity of their sentiments on the most important subjects, and the

tendency which the coincidence of their historical labors would naturally have had to excite rivalship and jealousy in less liberal minds. The passages I am now to quote from Mr. Hume's letters place in a most amiable light the characters both of the writer and of his correspondent.

"You have very good cause to be satisfied with the success of your History, as far as it can be judged of from a few weeks' publication. I have not heard of one who does not praise it warmly; and were I to enumerate all those whose suffrages I have either heard in its favor, or been told of, I should fill my letter with a list of names. Mallet told me that he was sure there was no Englishman capable of composing such a work. The town will have it that you was educated at Oxford, thinking it impossible for a mere untravelled Scotchman to produce such language. In short, you may depend on the success of your work, and that your name is known very much to your advantage.

"I am diverting myself with the notion how much you will profit by the applause of my enemies in Scotland. Had you and I been such fools as to have given way to jealousy, to have entertained animosity and malignity against each other, and to have rent all our acquaintance into parties, what a noble amusement we should have exhibited to the blockheads, which now they are likely to be disappointed of. All the people whose friendship or judgment either of us value, are friends to both, and will be pleased with the success of both, as we will be with that of each other. I declare to you I have not for a long time had a more sensible pleasure than the good reception of your History has given me within this fortnight."

I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of transcribing a few paragraphs from another letter of Mr. Hume's, dated the 20th of the same month. "I am afraid that my letters will be tedious and disagreeable to you by their uniformity. Nothing but continued and unvaried accounts of the same thing must in the end prove disgusting. Yet since you will hear me speak on this subject, I cannot help it, and must fatigue your ears as much

as ours are in this place by endless, and repeated, and noisy praises of the History of Scotland. Dr. Douglas told me yesterday that he had seen the bishop of Norwich, who had just bought the book from the high commendations he heard of it from Mr. Legge. Mallet told me that Lord Mansfield is at a loss whether he shall most esteem the matter or the style. Elliot told me, that being in company with George Grenville, that gentleman was speaking loud in the same key. Our friend pretended ignorance; said he knew the author, and if he thought the book good for any thing, would send for it and read it. 'Send for it by all means,' said Mr. Grenville; 'you have not read a better book of a long time.' 'But,' said Elliot, 'I suppose, although the matter may be tolerable, as the author was never on this side of the Tweed till he wrote it, it must be very barbarous in the expression.' 'By no means,' cried Mr. Grenville; 'had the author lived all his life in London, and in the best company, he could not have expressed himself with greater elegance and purity.' Lord Lyttleton seems to think that since the time of St. Paul there scarce has been a better writer than Dr. Robertson. Mr. Walpole triumphs in the success of his favorites, the Scotch, &c.

* * * *

"The great success of your book, besides its real merit, is forwarded by its prudence, and by the deference paid to established opinions. It gains also by its being your first performance, and by its surprising the public, who are not upon their guard against it. By reason of these two circumstances justice is more readily done to its merit, which, however, is really so great, that I believe there is scarce another instance of a first performance being so near perfection."

I shall close these extracts with a short passage from a letter addressed, many years afterwards, to Dr. Robertson by the late Lord Hailes; a person eminently distinguished by a critical acquaintance with the history of his country; and whose praise is of the greater value, that he was, in general, disposed to bestow it with a very sparing hand. The letter is dated in February, 1771.

"I am very happy in your favorable acceptance of the Annals of Scotland. Even your opinion is not enough to make me think of going beyond the restoration of James I. Your sketch of the history from that time to the death of James V. is of itself sufficient to deter me. It is possible that in your delineation of the history of the five Jameses, there may be errors and omissions; but you have drawn all the characters with such historical truth, that, if I were to work on the same ground, I might spoil and overcharge the canvass: at the same time, the reader would not see himself in a strange country; every object would be familiar to him."*

---

* The following letters, which have been kindly communicated to me by a friend of Lord Hailes, ascertain some important dates with respect to the progress of Dr. Robertson's studies.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"Sir, Gladsmuir, 22d Oct. 1753.

"I intend to employ some of the idle time of this winter in making a more diligent inquiry than ever I have done into that period of Scots history from the death of king James V. to the death of queen Mary. I have the more common histories of that time, such as Buchanan, Spottiswood, and Knox; but there are several collections of papers by Anderson, Jebb, Forbes, and others, which I know not how to come at. I am persuaded you have most of these books in your library, and I flatter myself you will be so good as to allow me the use of them. You know better what books to send me, and what will be necessary to give any light to this part of history, than I do what to ask, and therefore, I leave the particular books to your own choice, which you'll please order to be given to my servant. Whatever you send me shall be used with much care, and returned with great punctuality. I beg you may forgive this trouble. I am with great respect," &c.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"Sir, Gladsmuir, 26th July, 1757.

"I have now got forward to the year 1660, and as it will be impossible for me to steer through Gowrie's conspiracy without your guidance, I must take advantage of the friendly offer you was pleased to make me, and apply to you for such books and papers as you think to be necessary for my purpose. I would wish to give an accurate and rational account of the matter, but not very minute. I have in my possession Calderwood's MSS. and all the common printed histories; but I have neither Lord Cromarty's account, nor any other piece particularly relative to the conspiracy. I beg you may supply me with as many as you can, and direct me to any thing you think may be useful. The papers you are pleased to communicate to me, shall be shown to no human creature, and no farther use shall be made of them than you permit. My servant will take great care of whatever books or papers you give him. I need not say how sensible I am of the good will with which you are pleased to instruct me in this curious point of history, nor how much I expect to profit by it. I ever am," &c.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"Sir, Edinburgh, 8th Nov. 1758.

"I have taken the liberty to send you inclosed a preface to my book, which I have just now written. I find it very difficult for a man to speak of himself with any decency through three or four pages. Unluckily I have been obliged to write it in the utmost hurry, as Strahan is clamoring for it. I think it was necessary to say all in it that I have said, and yet it looks too like a puff. I send it to you, not only that you may do me the favor to correct any inaccuracies in the composition, but because

Of this work, so flattering to the author by its first success, no fewer than fourteen editions were published before his death, and he had the satisfaction to see its

---

there is a paragraph in it which I would not presume to publish without your permission, though I have taken care to word it so modestly that a man might have said it of himself. As I must send off the preface by to-morrow's post, I must beg the favor that you would return it with your remarks to-morrow morning. I would wish, if possible, that I had time to show it to Blair. I am with great respect," &c.

The letters which follow, although written many years afterwards, may, without impropriety, be introduced here, as they all relate, more or less, to the History of Scotland.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"My lord, College, Feb. 10, 1776.

"I hope your lordship will forgive me for having deferred so long to return you my best thanks for the very acceptable present which you were pleased to send me. Previous to doing this, I wished to have the satisfaction of perusing the Annals again, and the opinion I had formed of their merit, is in no degree diminished by an attentive review of them in their present dress.

"You have given authenticity and order to a period of our history, which has hitherto been destitute of both, and a Scotchman has now the pleasure of being able to pronounce what is true, and what is fabulous, in the early part of our national story. As I have no doubt with respect to the reception which this part of the Annals, though perhaps the least interesting, will meet with, I flatter myself that your lordship will go on with the work. Allow me, on the public account, to hope that you have not fixed *the accession of James I.* as an impassable boundary beyond which you are not to advance. It is at that period the more interesting age of our history commences. From thence the regular series of our laws begins. During the reign of the Jameses, many things still require the investigation of such an accurate and patient inquirer as your lordship. I hope that what I have done in my review of that period, will be no restraint on your lordship in entering upon that field. My view of it was a general one, that did not require the minute accuracy of a chronological research; and if you discover either omissions or mistakes in it, (and I dare say you will discover both,) I have no objection to your supplying the one, and correcting the other. Your strictures on me will not be made with a hostile hand, and I had much rather that these were made, than be deprived of the advantage that I shall reap from your completing your work. As far as I can judge by the opinion of those with whom I converse, the public wish is, that you should continue your Annals at least to the death of James V. I most heartily join my voice to this general desire, and wish you health to go on with what will be so much for the honor of your country. I am with great truth and respect," &c.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"My lord, College, March 13, 1776.

"When I took the liberty of applying to your lordship last week, I unluckily did not advert to the hurry of business during the last week of the session. In compliance with your request, I shall, without preamble or apology, mention what induced me to trouble your lordship.

"I am now in the twenty-eighth year of my authorship, and the proprietors of the History of Scotland purpose to end the second fourteen years of their copy-right splendidly, by publishing two new editions of that book, one in quarto, and another in octavo. This has induced me to make a general review of the whole work, and to avail myself both of the remarks of my friends, and the strictures of those who differ from me in opinion. I mean not to take the field as a controversial writer, or to state myself in opposition to any antagonist. Wherever I am satisfied that I have fallen into error, I shall quietly, and without reluctance, correct it. Wherever I think my sentiments right and well established, they shall stand. In some few places,

popularity increase to the last, notwithstanding the repeated assaults it had to encounter from various writers, distinguished by their controversial acuteness, and sec-

---

I shall illustrate what I have written, by materials and facts which I have discovered since the first publication of my book. These additions will not, I hope, be very bulky, but they will contribute, as I imagine, to throw light on several events which have been mistaken, or misrepresented. I shall take care, on account of the purchasers of former editions, that all the additions and alterations of any importance, shall be published separately, both in quarto and octavo.

"As I know how thoroughly your lordship is acquainted with every transaction in queen Mary's reign, and with how much accuracy you are accustomed to examine historical facts, it was my intention to have requested of you, that if any error or omission in my book had occurred to you in the perusal of it, you would be so obliging as to communicate your sentiments to me. I shall certainly receive such communications with much attention and gratitude. You have set me right with respect to the act 19th April, 1567, but I think that I can satisfy your lordship that it was esteemed in that age, and was really a concession of greater importance to the reformed than you seem to apprehend. I beg leave to desire that, if you have any remarks to communicate, they may be sent soon, as the booksellers are impatient. I trust your lordship will pardon the liberty I have taken. I have the honor to be," &c.

DR. ROBERTSON TO LORD HAILES.

"My lord, College of Edinburgh, March 20, 1786.

"I consider it as an unfortunate accident for me, that your lordship happened to be so much pre-occupied at the time when I took the liberty of applying to you. I return you thanks for the communication of your notes on the acts of parliament. Besides the entertainment and instruction I received from the perusal of them, I found some things of use to me, and have availed myself of the permission you was pleased to give me.

"I mentioned to your lordship that I differed a little from you about the effect of the act April 19, 1567. I inclose a copy both of the *text* corrected, as I intend to publish it in the new edition, and of a note which I shall add to explain my idea of the import of the act. I request of your lordship to peruse it, and if in any part it meets not with your approbation, be so good as to let me know. Please to return it as soon as you can, that I may communicate it, and any other additions and alterations to Mr. Davidson, who has promised to revise them.

"In 1776 your lordship published the Secret Correspondence of sir R. Cecil with James VI. I have not a copy of it, and have been unsuccessful in my application for one to some of my friends. If you have a copy, and will be so good as to allow me the use of it, I shall return it with the greatest care, as I do herewith the notes I received from your lordship. I have attended to the notes in Bannatyne's poems. I have the Hamilton MSS. in three volumes folio. They are curious. I have the honor to be with great respect," &c.

I shall subjoin some extracts from Mr. Hume's letters to Dr. Robertson, written about this period, and a few other passages from different correspondents. They seem to me worthy of preservation, although the extraneous matter they contain rendered it impossible for me to incorporate them with my narrative.

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"My dear sir, London, Lisle street, 18th Nov. 1758.

"According to your permission I have always got your corrected sheets from Strahan; and am glad to find, that we shall agree in almost all the material parts of our history. Your resolution to assert the authenticity of Mary's letter to Bothwell, with the consequence which must necessarily follow, removes the chief point in which, I apprehend, we should differ. There remain, however, two other points

onded by all the prepossessions which are likely to influence the opinions of the majority of readers. The character of Mary has been delineated anew, and the

---

where I have not the good fortune to agree with you, *viz.* The violation of the treaty of Perth by Mary of Guise, and the innocency of Mary with regard to Babington's conspiracy: but as I had written notes upon these passages, the public must judge between us. Only allow me to say, that even if you be in the right with regard to the last, (of which notwithstanding my deference to your authority, I cannot perceive the least appearance) you are certainly too short and abrupt in handling it. I believe you go contrary to received opinion; and the point was of consequence enough to merit a note or a dissertation.

"There is still another point in which we differ, and which reduced me to great perplexity. You told me, that all historians had been mistaken with regard to James's behaviour on his mother's trial and execution, that he was not really the pious son he pretended to be; that the appearances which deceived the world, were put on at the solicitation of the French ambassador, Courcelles; and that I should find all this proved by a manuscript of Dr. Campbell's. I accordingly spoke of the matter to Dr. Campbell, who confirmed what you said, with many additions and amplifications. I desired to have the manuscript, which he sent me. But great was my surprise when I found the contrary in every page; many praises bestowed on the king's piety both by Courcelles and the French court; his real grief and resentment painted in the strongest colors; resolutions even taken by him to form an alliance with Philip of Spain, in order to get revenge; repeated advices given him by Courcelles and the French ministers, rather to conceal his resentment, till a proper opportunity offered of taking vengeance. What most displeased me in this affair was, that as I thought myself obliged to follow the ordinary tenor of the printed historian, while you appealed to manuscript, it would be necessary for me to appeal to the same manuscripts, to give extracts of them, and to oppose your conclusions. Though I know that I could execute this matter in a friendly and obliging manner for you, yet I own that I was very uneasy at finding myself under a necessity of observing any thing which might appear a mistake in your narration. But there came to me a man this morning, who as I fancied gave me the key of the difficulty, but without freeing me from my perplexity. This was a man commonly employed by Millar and Strahan to decypher manuscripts. He brought me a letter of yours to Strahan, where you desired him to apply to me in order to point out the passages proper to be inserted in your appendix, and proper to prove the assertion of your text. You add there, these letters are in the French language. I immediately concluded that you had not read the manuscripts, but had taken it on Mr. Campbell's word: for the letters are in English, translated by I know not whom from the French. I could do nothing on this occasion but desire Strahan to stop the press in printing the appendix, and stay till I wrote to you. If I could persuade you to change the narration of the text, that sheet could be easily cancelled, and an appendix formed proper to confirm an opposite account. If you still persist in your opinion, somebody else whom you trusted, might be employed to find the proper passages; for I cannot find them.

"There is only one passage which looks like your opinion, and which I shall transcribe to you. It is a relation of what passed between James and Courcelles, upon the first rumor of the discovery of Babington's conspiracy, before James apprehended his mother to be in any danger. 'The king said he loved his mother as much as nature and duty bound him; but he could not love her

: For he knew well she bore him no more good will than she did to the queen of England: That he had seen with his own eyes before Foulnaye's departure out of Scotland a letter to him, whereby she sent him word, that if he would not conform himself to her will, and follow her counsels and advice, that he should content himself with the lordship of Darnley, which was all that appertained unto him by his father: Farther, that he had seen other letters under her own hand, confirming her evil towards him: Besides, that she had oftentimes gone about to make a regency in Scotland, and to put him besides the crown: That it behoved him to think of his own affairs, and that he thought the queen of England would attempt nothing against her person without making him acquainted: That his mother was henceforward to carry herself both towards him and the queen of

tale of her misfortune has again been told, with no common powers of expression and pathos, by an historian more indulgent to her errors, and more undis-

---

England after another sort without bending any more upon such practices and intelligences as she had in former times: That he hoped to set such persons about her as' (Here the manuscript is not farther legible.) But though such were James's sentiments before he apprehended his mother to be in danger, he adopted a directly opposite conduct afterwards, as I told you. I can only express my wishes that you may see reason to conform your narrative in vol. ii. p. 139, 140, to this account, or omit that appendix altogether, or find some other person who can better execute your intentions than it is possible for me to do."

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"My dear sir, 25th January, 1759.

"What I wrote you with regard to Mary's concurrence in the conspiracy against queen Elizabeth, was from the printed histories of papers; and nothing ever appeared to me more evident. Your chief objection, I see, is derived from one circumstance, that neither the secretaries nor conspirators were confronted with Mary; but you must consider that the law did not then require this confrontation, and it was in no case the practice. The crown could not well grant it in one case without granting it in all, because the refusing of it would then have been a strong presumption of innocence in the prisoner. Yet as Mary's was an extraordinary case, Elizabeth was willing to have granted it. I find in Forbes's MS. papers, sent me by Lord Royston, a letter of hers to Burleigh and Walsingham, wherein she tells them, that, if they thought proper, they might carry down the two secretaries to Fotheringay, in order to confront them with her. But they reply, that they think it needless.

"But I am now sorry to tell you, that by Murden's State Papers, which are printed, the matter is put beyond all question. I got these papers during the holidays by Dr. Birch's means; and as soon as I had read them, I ran to Millar, and desired him very earnestly to stop the publication of your history till I should write to you, and give you an opportunity of correcting a mistake of so great moment: but he absolutely refused compliance. He said that your book was now finished, that the copies would be shipped for Scotland in two days; that the whole narration of Mary's trial must be wrote over again; that this would require time, and it was uncertain whether the new narrative could be brought within the same compass with the old: that this change he said would require the cancelling a great many sheets; that there were scattered passages through the volumes founded on your theory, and these must also be all cancelled, and that this change required the new printing of a great part of the edition. For these reasons, which do not want force, he refused, after deliberation, to stop his publication, and I was obliged to acquiesce. Your best apology at present is, that you could not possibly see the grounds of Mary's guilt, and every equitable person will excuse you.

"I am sorry, on many accounts, that you did not see this collection of Murden's. Among other curiosities, there are several instructions to H. Killigrew, dated 10th Sept. 1572. He was then sent into Scotland. It there appears, that the regents, Murray and Lennox, had desired Mary to be put into their hands, in order to try her and put her to death. Elizabeth there offers to regent Mar to deliver her up, provided good security were given, 'that she should receive that she hath deserved there by order of justice, whereby no further peril should ensue by her escaping, or by setting her up again.' It is probable Mar refused compliance, for no steps were taken towards it.

"I am nearly printed out, and shall be sure to send you a copy by the stage coach, or some other conveyance. I beg of you to make remarks as you go along. It would have been much better had we communicated before printing, which was always my desire, and was most suitable to the friendship which always did, and I hope always will, subsist between us. I speak this chiefly on my own account. For though I had the perusal of your sheets before I printed, I was not able to derive sufficient benefits from them, or indeed to make any alteration by their assistance. There still remain, I fear, many errors, of which you could have convinced

tinguishing in his praise: but, after all, it is in the history of Dr. Robertson that every one still reads the transactions of her reign; and such is his skilful con-

---

me, if we had canvassed the matter in conversation. Perhaps I might also have been sometimes no less fortunate with you. Particularly I could almost undertake to convince you, that the earl of Murray's conduct with the duke of Norfolk was no way dishonorable.

"I have seen a copy of your history with Charles Stanhope. Lord Willoughby, who had been there reading some passages of it, said, that you was certainly mistaken with regard to the act passed in the last parliament of Mary, settling the reformation. He said that the act of parliament the first of James was no proof of it: for though that statute contains a statute where the queen's name was employed, yet that is always the case with the bills brought into parliament, even though they receive not the royal assent, nor perhaps pass the houses. I wish this be not the case, considering the testimony of Buchanan, Calderwood, and Spottiswood. Besides, if the bill had before received the royal assent, what necessity of repeating it, or passing it again? Mary's title was more undisputable than James's.

"Dr. Blair tells me, that prince Edward is reading you, and is charmed. I hear the same of the princess and and prince of Wales. But what will really give you pleasure, I lent my copy to Elliot during the holidays, who thinks it one of the finest performances he ever read; and though he expected much, he finds more. He remarked, however, (which is also my opinion) that in the beginning, before your pen was sufficiently accustomed to the historic style, you employ too many digressions and reflections. This was also somewhat my own case, which I have corrected in my new edition.

"Millar was proposing to publish me about the middle of March, but I shall communicate to him your desire, even though I think it entirely groundless, as you will likewise think after you have read my volume. He has very needlessly delayed your publication till the first of February, at the desire of the Edinburgh booksellers, who could no way be affected by a publication in London. I was exceedingly sorry not to be able to comply with your desire, when you expressed your wish, that I should not write this period. I could not write downward. For when you find occasion, by new discoveries, to correct your opinion with regard to facts which passed in queen Elizabeth's days; who, that has not the best opportunities of informing himself, could venture to relate any recent transactions? I must therefore have abandoned altogether this scheme of the English History, in which I had proceeded so far, if I had not acted as I did. You will see what light and force this history of the Tudors bestows on that of the Stuarts. Had I been prudent I should have begun with it. I care not to boast, but I will venture to say, that I have now effectually stopped the mouths of all those villanous whigs who railed at me.

"You are so kind as to ask me about my coming down. I can yet answer nothing. I have the strangest reluctance to change places. I lived several years happy with my brother at Ninewells, and had not his marriage changed a little the state of the family, I believe I should have lived and died there. I used every expedient to evade this journey to London, yet it is now uncertain whether I shall ever leave it. I have had some invitations, and some intentions of taking a trip to Paris; but I believe it will be safer for me not to go thither, for I might probably settle there for life. No one was ever endowed with so great a portion of the *vis inertiæ*. But as I live here very privately, and avoid as much as possible, (and it is easily possible) all connexions with the great, I believe I should be better at Edinburgh." * * *

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

London, 8th Feb. 1759.

* * * * "As to the *Age of Leo the Tenth*, it was Warton himself who intended to write it; but he has not wrote it, and probably never will. If I understand your hint, I should conjecture, that you had some thoughts of taking up the subject. But how can you acquire knowledge of the great works of sculpture, architecture, and painting, by which that age was chiefly distinguished? Are you versed in all the anecdotes of the Italian literature? These questions I heard proposed in a company of literati when I inquired concerning this design of Warton. They applied

trast of light and shade, aided by the irresistible charm of his narration, that the story of the beautiful and unfortunate queen, as related by him, excites on the

---

their remarks to that gentleman, who yet, they say, has travelled. I wish they do not all of them fall more fully on you. However, you must not be idle. May I venture to suggest to you the Ancient History, particularly that of Greece. I think Rollin's success might encourage you, nor need you be in the least intimidated by his merit. That author has no other merit but a certain facility and sweetness of narration, but has loaded his work with fifty puerilities.

"Our friend, Wedderburn, is advancing with great strides in his profession. * * *

"I desire my compliments to Lord Elibank. I hope his lordship has forgot his vow of answering us, and of washing Queen Mary white. I am afraid that it is impossible; but his lordship is very well qualified to gild her. I am," &c.

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

* * * * * * *

"I forgot to tell you, that two days ago I was in the house of commons, where an English gentleman came to me, and told me, that he had lately sent to a grocer's shop for a pound of raisins, which he received wrapt up in a paper that he showed me. How would you have turned pale at the sight! It was a leaf of your history, and the very character of queen Elizabeth, which you had labored so finely, little thinking it would so soon come to so disgraceful an end. I happened a little after to see Millar, and told him the story; consulting him, to be sure, on the fate of his new boasted historian, of whom he was so fond. But the story proves more serious than I apprehended. For he told Strahan, who thence suspects villany among his prentices and journeymen; and has sent me very earnestly to know the gentleman's name, that he may find out the grocer, and trace the matter to the bottom. In vain did I remonstrate that this was sooner or later the fate of all authors, *serius, ocyus, sors exitura.* He will not be satisfied; and begs me to keep my jokes for another occasion. But that I am resolved not to do; and therefore, being repulsed by his passion and seriousness, I direct them against you.

"Next week I am published; and then, I expect a constant comparison will be made between Dr. Robertson and Mr. Hume. I shall tell you in a few weeks which of these heroes is likely to prevail. Meanwhile, I can inform both of them for their comforts, that their combat is not likely to make half so much noise as that between Broughton and the one-eyed coachman. *Vanitas vanitatum, atque omnia vanitas.* I shall still except, however, the friendship and good opinion of worthy men. I am," &c.

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"My dear sir, London, 12th March, 1759.

"I believe I mentioned to you, a French gentleman, Monsieur Helvetius, whose book, *De l'Esprit*, was making a great noise in Europe. He is a very fine genius, and has the character of a very worthy man. My name is mentioned several times in his work with marks of esteem; and he has made me an offer, if I would translate his work into English, to translate anew all my philosophical writings into French. He says that none of them are well done, except that on the Natural History of Religion, by Monsieur Matigny, a counsellor of state. He added, that the Abbé Prevot, celebrated for the *Memoires d'un Homme d'Honneur*, and other entertaining books, was just now translating my history. This account of Helvetius engaged me to send him over the new editions of all my writings; and I have added your history, which, I told him, was here published with great applause; adding, that the subject was interesting and the execution masterly; and that it was probable some man of letters at Paris may think that a translation of it would be agreeable to the public. I thought that this was the best method of executing your intentions. I could not expect that any Frenchman here would be equal to the work. There is one Carracioli, who came to me and spoke of translating my new volume of history; but as he also mentioned his intentions of translating Smollet, I gave him no encouragement to proceed. The same reason would make me averse to see you in his hands.

whole a deeper interest in her fortunes, and a more lively sympathy with her fate, than have been produced by all the attempts to canonize her memory, whether

---

"But though I have given this character of your work to Monsieur Helvetius, I warn you, that this is the last time, that, either to Frenchman or Englishman, I shall ever speak the least good of it. A plague take you! Here I sat near the historical summit of Parnassus, immediately under Dr. Smollet; and you have the impudence to squeeze yourself by me, and place yourself directly under his feet. Do you imagine that this can be agreeable to me? And must I not be guilty of great simplicity to contribute by my endeavours to your thrusting me out of my place in Paris as well as at London? But I give you warning that you will find the matter somewhat difficult, at least in the former city. A friend of mine, who is there, writes home to his father the strangest accounts on that head; which my modesty will not permit me to repeat, but which is allowed me very deliciously to swallow.

"I have got a good reason or pretence for excusing me to Monsieur Helvetius with regard to the translating his work. A translation of it was previously advertised here.

"I remain," &c.

MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"My dear sir, London, 29th May, 1759.

"I had a letter from Helvetius lately, wrote before your book arrived at Paris. He tells me that the Abbé Prevot, who had just finished the translation of my history, *paroit très disposé à traduire l'Histoire d'Ecosse que vient de faire Monsieur Robertson.* If he be engaged by my persuasion, I shall have the satisfaction of doing you a real credit and pleasure: for he is one of the best pens in Paris.

"I looked with great impatience in your new edition for the note you seemed to intend with regard to the breach of the capitulation of Perth; and was much disappointed at missing it. I own that I am very curious on that head. I cannot so much as imagine a color upon which their accusations could possibly be founded. The articles were only two; indemnity to the inhabitants, and the exclusion of French soldiers—now that Scotch national troops were not Frenchmen and foreigners seems pretty apparent: and both Knox and the manifesto of the congregation acquit the queen regent of any breach of the first article, as I had observed in my note to page 422. This makes me suspect that some facts have escaped me; and I beg you to indulge my curiosity by informing me of them.

* * * * * * * *

"Our friend Smith* is very successful here, and Gerard † is very well received. The Epigoniad I cannot so much promise for, though I have done all in my power to forward it, particularly by writing a letter to the Critical Review, which you may peruse. I find, however, some good judges profess a great esteem for it, but *habent et sua fata libelli:* however, if you want a little flattery to the author, (which I own is very refreshing to an author) you may tell him that Lord Chesterfield said to me he was a great poet. I imagine that Wilkie will be very much elevated by praise from an English earl, and a knight of the garter, and an ambassador, and a secretary of state, and a man of so great reputation. For I observe that the greatest rustics are commonly most affected with such circumstances.

"Fergusson's book ‡ has a great deal of genius and fine writing, and will appear in time." * * * *

FROM DR. BIRCH TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Dear sir, London, Feb. 8th, 1759.

"I have just read over the second volume of your excellent history; and the satisfaction which I have received from the perusal of it, and the gratitude which I owe you for the honor done me in it, as well as for so valuable a present, will not permit me to lose one post in returning you my sincerest acknowledgments. My Lord Roys-

---

* Theory of Moral Sentiments. † Essay on Taste.
‡ Essay on the History of Civil Society.

inspired by the sympathetic zeal of the Romish church, or the enthusiasm of Scottish chivalry,

In perusing the letters addressed to Dr. Robertson on the publication of this book, it is somewhat remarkable

---

ton likewise desires me to transmit to you his thanks and compliments in the strongest terms.

"Though your work has been scarce a fortnight in the hands of the public, I can already inform you, upon the authority of the best judges, that the spirit and elegance of the composition, and the candor, moderation, and humanity which run through it, will secure you the general approbation both of the present age and of posterity, and raise the character of our country in a species of writing, in which of all others it has been most defective.

"If the second volume of the State Papers of Lord Burleigh published since Christmas here, had appeared before your history had been finished, it would have furnished you with reasons for entertaining a less favorable opinion of Mary queen of Scots in one or two points, than you seem at present possessed of. The principal is with regard to her last intrigues and correspondences, which were the immediate cause of her death. And I could wish you had likewise seen a manuscript account of her trial in Lord Royston's possession. This account is much fuller than Camden's, whose history is justly to be suspected in every thing relating to her; or than any other, that has yet seen the light. It contains so ample a state of the evidence produced of her guilt, as, I think, leaves no doubt of it; notwithstanding that the witnesses were not confronted with her; a manner of proceeding, which, though certainly due to every person accused, was not usual either before her time or long after.

"You conclude in the note, vol. i. p. 307, in favor of her innocence from any criminal intrigue with Rizzio from the silence of Randolph on that head. But I apprehend, that in opposition to this allegation you may be urged with the joint letter of that gentleman and the Earl of Bedford of 27th March, 1566, in your appendix, No. xv. p. 22.

"I desire you to make my compliments acceptable to Sir David Dalrymple and Mr. Davidson, and believe me to be," &c.

FROM SIR GILBERT ELLIOT TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Dear sir, Admiralty, January 20th, 1759.

"Millar has just sent me the History of Scotland. I cannot imagine why he should delay the publication so long as the first of February, for I well know that the printing has been completed a great while. You could have sent me no present, which on its own account I should have esteemed so much; but you have greatly enhanced its value, by allowing me to accept it as a memorial and testimony of a friendship which I have long cultivated with equal satisfaction and sincerity. I am no stranger to your book, though your copy is but just put into my hands: David Hume so far indulged my impatience, as to allow me to carry to the country during the holidays, the loose sheets which he happened to have by him. In that condition I read it quite through with the greatest satisfaction, and in much less time than I ever employed on any portion of history of the same length. I had certainly neither leisure nor inclination to exercise the function of a critic; carried along with the stream of the narration, I only felt, when I came to the conclusion, that you had greatly exceeded the expectations I had formed, though I do assure you these were not a little sanguine. If, upon a more deliberate perusal, I discover any blemish, I shall point it out without any scruple: at present, it seems to me that you have rendered the period you treat of as interesting as any part of our British story: the views you open of policy, manners, and religion, are ingenious, solid, and deep. Your work will certainly be ranked in the highest historical class; and, for my own part, I think it besides, a composition of uncommon genius and eloquence. I was afraid you might have been interrupted by the the reformation, but I find it much otherwise; you treat it with great propriety, and in my opinion, with sufficient freedom. No revolution, whether civil or religious, can be accomplished without that degree of ardor and passion, which, in a later age, will be matter of ridicule to men who do not feel the occasion, and enter into the spirit of the times. But I must not get into dissertations:—I hope you will ever believe me, with great regard," &c.

that I have not found one in which he is charged with the slightest unfairness towards the queen; and that, on the contrary, almost all his correspondents accuse him of an undue prepossession in her favor. "I am afraid," says Mr. Hume, "that you, as well as myself, have drawn Mary's character with too great softenings. She was undoubtedly a violent woman at all times. You will see in Murden proofs of the utmost rancor against her innocent, good-natured, dutiful son. She certainly disinherited him. What think you of a conspiracy for kidnapping him, and delivering him a prisoner to the king of Spain, never to recover his liberty till he should turn Catholic? Tell Goodall, that if he can but give me up Queen Mary, I hope to satisfy him in every thing else; and he will have the pleasure of seeing John Knox and the reformers made very ridiculous."

"It is plain," says Mr. Walpole, "that you wish to excuse Mary; and yet it is so plain that you never violate truth in her favor, that I own I think still worse of her than I did, since I read your history."

Dr. Birch expresses himself much to the same purpose. "If the second volume of the state papers of Lord Burleigh, published since Christmas here, had appeared before your history had been finished, it would have furnished you with reasons for entertaining a less favorable opinion of Mary Queen of Scots in one or two points, than you seem at present possessed of."

Dr. John Blair, too, in a letter dated from London observes to Dr. Robertson, that "the only general objection to his work was founded on his tenderness for Queen Mary." "Lord Chesterfield," says he, "though he approves much of your history, told me, that he finds this to be a bias which no Scotchman can get the better of."

I would not be understood, by quoting these passages, to give any opinion upon the subject to which they refer. It is a subject which I have never examined with attention, and which, I must confess, never excited my curiosity. Whatever judgment we form concerning the points in dispute, it leads to no general conclusion concerning human affairs, nor throws any new light on human character. Like any other historical question, in

which the evidence has been industriously darkened by the arts of contending parties, the proofs of Mary's innocence or guilt may furnish an amusing and harmless employment to the leisure of the antiquary; but at this distance of time, it is difficult to conceive how prejudice or passion should enter into the discussion, or should magnify it into an object of important and serious research. With respect to Dr. Robertson's narrative, in particular, it is sufficiently manifest, that whatever inaccuracies may be detected in it by the labors of succeeding inquirers, they can never furnish to the partisans of Mary, any ground for impeaching his candor and good faith as a writer. All his prepossessions (if he had any on this subject) must have been in favor of the queen; for, it was chiefly from the powerful interest excited by her story, that he could hope for popularity with the multitude; and, it was only by the romantic pictures which her name presents to the fancy, that he could accommodate to the refinement of modern taste, the annals of a period, where perfidy, cruelty, and bigotry, appear in all their horrors; unembellished by those attractions which, in other states of society they have so often assumed, and which, how much soever they may afflict the moralist, yet facilitate and adorn the labors of the historian.

Among the various circumstances that distinguish Dr. Robertson's genius and taste in the execution of this work, the address with which he interweaves the personal history of the queen with the general events he records, is not the least remarkable. Indeed, without the aid of so interesting a character, the affairs of Scotland, during the period he treats of, could not have derived, even from his hand, a sufficient importance and dignity to engage the curiosity of the present age.

Another difficulty arising also from his subject he appears to me to have surmounted with exquisite skill, In relating the transactions of a foreign country, however remote the period, and however antiquated the manners, it is easy for an historian to avoid in his narrative, whatever might lessen the dignity of the actors, or lower the tone of his composition. The employment of expres-

sions debased by common and trivial use, is superseded by the necessity he is under to translate from one language into another; and the most insignificant of his details derive a charm from the novelty of the scenery. The writer, too, who, in this island, employs his genius on the ancient history of England, addresses himself to readers already enamoured of the subject, and who listen with fond prepossessions to the recital of facts consecrated in their imaginations by the tale of the nursery. Even a description of old English manners, expressed in the obsolete dialect of former centuries, pleases by its simplicity and truth; and while it presents to us those retrospects of the past on which the mind loves to dwell, has no tendency to awaken any mean or ludicrous images. But the influence of Scottish associations, so far as it is favorable to antiquity, is confined to Scotchmen alone, and furnishes no resources to the writer who aspires to a place among the English classics. Nay, such is the effect of that provincial situation to which Scotland is now reduced, that the transactions of former ages are apt to convey to ourselves exaggerated conceptions of barbarism, from the uncouth and degraded dialect in which they are recorded. To adapt the history of such a country to the present standard of British taste, it was necessary for the author, not only to excite an interest for names which, to the majority of his readers, were formerly indifferent or unknown, but what was still more difficult, to unite in his portraits the truth of nature with the softenings of art, and to reject whatever was unmeaning or offensive in the drapery, without effacing the characteristic garb of the times. In this task of "conquering," as Livy expresses it, "the rudeness of antiquity by the art of writing," they alone are able to judge how far Dr. Robertson has succeeded, who have compared his work with the materials out of which it was formed.

Nor are these sacrifices to modern taste inconsistent with the fidelity of a history which records the transactions of former ages. On the contrary, they aid the judgment of the reader in forming a philosophical estimate of the condition and character of our ancestors, by counteracting that strong bias of the mind which

confounds human nature and human life with the adventitious and ever changing attire which they borrow from fashion. When we read the compositions of Buchanan in his native tongue, how completely are his genius and taste obscured by those homely manners which the coarseness of his dialect recalls; and how difficult is it to believe that they express the ideas and sentiments of the same writer, whose Latin productions vie with the best models of antiquity! No fact can illustrate more strongly the necessity of correcting our common impressions concerning the ancient state of Scotland, by translating not only the antiquated phraseology of our forefathers into a more modern idiom, but by translating (if I may use the expression) their antiquated fashions into the corresponding fashions of our own times.

The peculiar circumstances of Scotland since the union of the crowns, are extremely apt to warp our ideas with respect to its previous history. The happy but slow effects produced by the union of the kingdoms do not extend beyond the memory of some of our contemporaries; and the traditions we have received concerning the condition of our immediate predecessors are apt to impress us with a belief that, at a still more early period, a proportionally less degree of civilization prevailed. It requires an effort of reflection to conceive the effects which must have resulted from the residence of a court; and it is not, perhaps, easy for us to avoid underrating the importance of that court while it existed. During the long and intimate intercourse with England, which preceded the disputed succession between Bruce and Baliol, it was certainly not without its share of that "barbaric pomp," which was then affected by the English sovereigns; nor, under our later kings, connected as it was with the court of France, could it be altogether untinctured with those envied manners and habits, of which that country has been always regarded as the parent soil, and which do not seem to be the native growth of either part of our island. These circumstances, accordingly, appear to have operated so powerfully on the higher orders, that even in their own vernacular tongue, their compositions do not suffer by a

comparison with the style of their English contemporaries; and at the era when Dr. Robertson's History closes, some of the purest and most correct performances of the age may be selected from the correspondence of our Scottish statesmen.

This era was followed by a long and melancholy period, not less fatal to genius than to morals; and which had scarcely arrived at its complete termination, when Dr. Robertson appeared as an author; aspiring at once to adorn the monuments of former times, when Scotland was yet a kingdom, and to animate his countrymen by his example, in reviving its literary honors.

Before quitting this first work of Dr. Robertson, I must not omit to mention (what forms the strongest testimony of its excellence) the severe trial it had to undergo in the public judgment, by appearing nearly at the same time with that volume of Mr. Hume's History, which involves an account of Scottish affairs during the reigns of queen Mary and king James. It is not my intention to attempt a parallel of these two eminent writers: nor, indeed, would the sincerity of their mutual attachment, and the lively recollection of it which still remains with many of their common friends, justify me in stating their respective merits in the way of opposition. Their peculiar excellencies, besides, were of a kind so different, that they might be justly said (in the language which a Roman critic employs in speaking of Livy and Sallust) to be *pares magis quam similes.* They divide between them the honor of having supplied an important blank in English literature, by enabling their countrymen to dispute the palm of historical writing with the other nations of Europe. Many have since followed their example, in attempting to bestow interest and ornament on different portions of British story; but the public voice sufficiently acquits me of any partiality when I say, that hitherto they have only been followed at a distance. In this respect, I may with confidence apply to them the panegyric which Quinctilian pronounces on the two great historians of ancient Greece; and, perhaps, if I were inclined to characterize the beauties most prominent in each, I might, without much impropriety, avail myself of the contrast with which that panegyric concludes:

"Historiam multi scripsêre, sed nemo dubitat, duos longe cæteris præferendos, quorum diversa virtus laudem pene est parem consecuta. Densus et brevis et semper instans sibi Thucydides. Dulcis et candidus et fusus Herodotus. Ille concitatis, hic remissis affectibus melior. Ille vi, hic voluptate."

SECTION II.

Progress of Dr. Robertson's literary Plans and Undertakings.—History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles the Fifth.

During the time that the History of Scotland was in the press, Dr. Robertson removed with his family from Gladsmuir to Edinburgh, in consequence of a presentation to one of the churches of that city. His preferments now multiplied rapidly. In 1759, he was appointed chaplain of Stirling Castle; in 1761, one of his majesty's chaplains in ordinary for Scotland; and in 1762, he was chosen principal of this university. Two years afterwards, the office of king's historiographer for Scotland (with a salary of two hundred pounds a year) was revived in his favor.

The revenue arising from these different appointments, though far exceeding what had ever been enjoyed before by any Presbyterian clergyman in Scotland, did not satisfy the zeal of some of Dr. Robertson's admirers, who, mortified at the narrow field which this part of the island afforded to his ambition, wished to open to it the career of the English church. References to such a project occur in letters addressed to him about this time by Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Hume, and Dr. John Blair. What answer he returned to them, I have not been able to learn; but, as the subject is mentioned once only by each of these gentlemen, it is presumable that his disapprobation was expressed in those decided terms which became the consistency and dignity of his character.

Dr. Robertson's own ambition was, in the mean time, directed to a different object. Soon after the publication of his Scottish History, we find him consulting his friends about the choice of another historical subject; anxious to add new laurels to those he had already acquired. Dr. John Blair urged him strongly on this occasion to write a complete History of England; and mentioned to him, as an inducement, a conversation between Lord Chesterfield and Colonel Irwin, in which the former said, that he would not scruple, if Dr. Robertson would undertake such a work, to move, in the house of peers, that he should have public encouragement to enable him to carry it into execution. But this proposal he was prevented from listening to, by his unwillingness to interfere with Mr. Hume; although it coincided with a favorite plan which he himself had formed at a very early period of his life. The two subjects which appear to have chiefly divided his choice were, the history of Greece, and that of the Emperor Charles the Fifth. Between these he hesitated long, balancing their comparative advantages and disadvantages, and availing himself of all the lights that his correspondents could impart to him. Mr. Walpole and Mr. Hume took a more peculiar interest in his deliberations, and discussed the subject with him in length in various letters. I shall extract a few passages from these. The opinions of such writers upon such a question cannot fail to be generally interesting; and some of the hints they suggest may perhaps be useful to those who, conscious of their own powers, are disposed to regret that the field of historical composition is exhausted.

The following passages are copied from a letter of Mr. Walpole, dated 4th March, 1759.

"If I can throw in any additional temptation to your diposition for writing, it is worth my while, even at the hazard of my judgment and my knowledge, both of which however are small enough to make me tender of them. Before I read your history, I should probably have been glad to dictate to you, and (I will venture to say it—it satirizes nobody but myself) should have thought I did honor to an obscure Scots clergyman, by

directing his studies with my superior lights and abilities. How you have saved me, sir, from making a ridiculous figure, by making so great an one yourself! but could I suspect, that a man I believe much younger, and whose dialect I scarce understood, and who came to me with all the diffidence and modesty of a very middling author, and who I was told had passed his life in a small living near Edinburgh; could I suspect that he had not only written what all the world now allows the best modern history, but that he had written it in the purest English, and with as much seeming knowledge of men and courts as if he had passed all his life in important embassies? In short, sir, I have not power to make you, what you ought to be, a minister of state; but I will do all I can, I will stimulate you to continue writing, and I shall do it without presumption.

"I should like either of the subjects you mention, and I can figure one or two others that would shine in your hands. In one light the history of Greece seems preferable. You know all the materials for it that can possibly be had. It is concluded; it is clear of all objections; for perhaps nobody but I should run wildly into passionate fondness for liberty, if I was writing about Greece. It even might, I think, be made agreeably new, and *that* by comparing the extreme difference of their manners and ours, particularly in the article of finances, a system almost new in the world.

. . . . . .

"With regard to the history of Charles V., it is a magnificent subject, and worthy of you. It is more: it is fit for you; for you have shown that you can write on ticklish subjects with the utmost discretion, and on subjects of religious party with temper and impartiality. Besides, by what little I have skimmed of history myself, I have seen how many mistakes, how many prejudices, may easily be detected: and though much has been written on that age, probably truth still remains to be written of it. Yet I have an objection to this subject. Though Charles V. was in a manner the emperor of Europe, yet he was a German or a Spaniard. Consider, sir, by what you must have found in writing

the History of Scotland, how difficult it would be for the most penetrating genius of another country to give an adequate idea of Scottish story. So much of all transactions must take their rise from, and depend on, national laws, customs, and ideas, that I am persuaded a native would always discover great mistakes in a foreign writer. Greece, indeed, is a foreign country; but no Greek is alive to disprove one.

"There are two other subjects which I have sometimes had a mind to treat myself; though my naming one of them will tell you why I did not. It was *the History of Learning*. Perhaps, indeed, it is a work which could not be executed unless intended by a young man from his first looking on a book with reflection. The other is, the history of what I may in one light call the most remarkable period of the world, by containing a succession of five good princes: I need not say, they were Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines. Not to mention, that no part almost of the Roman history has been well written from the death of Domitian, this period would be the fairest pattern for use, if history can ever effect what she so much pretends to, doing good. I should be tempted to call it the *History of Humanity;* for though Trajan and Adrian had private vices that disgraced them as men, as princes they approached to perfection. Marcus Aurelius arrived still nearer, perhaps with a little ostentation; yet vanity is an amiable machine, if it operates to benevolence. Antoninus Pius seems to have been as good as human nature royalized can be. Adrian's persecution of the Christians would be objected, but then it is much controverted. I am no admirer of elective monarchies; and yet it is remarkable, that when Aurelius's diadem descended to his natural heir, not to the heir of his virtues, the line of beneficence was extinguished; for I am sorry to say, that *hereditary* and *bad* are almost synonymous. But I am sensible, sir, that I am a bad adviser for you; the chastity, the purity, the good sense and regularity of your manner, that unity you mention, and of which you are the greatest master, should not be led astray by the licentious frankness, and, I hope,

honest indignation of my way of thinking. I may be a fitter companion than a guide; and it is with most sincere zeal, that I offer myself to contribute any assistance in my power towards polishing your future work, whatever it shall be. You want little help; I can give little; and indeed I, who am taxed with incorrectnesses, should not assume airs of a corrector. My *Catalogue* I intended should have been exact enough in style: it has not been thought so by some: I tell you, that you may not trust me too much. Mr. Gray, a very perfect judge has sometimes censured me for parliamentary phrases, familiar to me as your Scotch law is to you. I might plead for my inaccuracies, that the greatest part of my book was written with people talking in the room; but that is no excuse to myself, who intended it for correct. However, it is easier to remark inaccuracies in the work of another than in one's own; and, since you command me, I will go again over your second volume, with an eye to the slips, a light in which I certainly did not intend my second examination of it."

In transcribing some of these paragraphs, as well as in the other extracts I have borrowed from Mr. Walpole's letters, I must acknowledge, that I have been less influenced by my own private judgment, than by my deference for the partiality which the public has long entertained for this popular and fashionable writer. Of the literary talents of an author on whom so much flattery has been lavished, it does not become me to speak disrespectfully; nor would I be understood to detract from his merits in his own peculiar and very limited walk of historical disquisition: but I should be wanting to myself, if I were not to avow, that in the foregoing quotation, my object was rather to gratify the curiosity of others, than to record a testimony which I consider as of any importance to Dr. Robertson's fame. The value of praise, besides, whatever be the abilities of him who bestows it, depends on the opinion we entertain of his candor and sincerity; qualities which it will be difficult to allow to Mr. Walpole, after comparing the various passages quoted in this memoir, with the sentiments he expresses on the same subject in his posthumous publication.

For the length of the following extract from a letter of Mr. Hume's, no such apology is necessary. The matter is valuable in itself; and the objections stated to the age of Charles V. as a subject for history, form the highest possible panegyric on the abilities of the writer, by whom the difficulties, which appeared so formidable to Mr. Hume, were successfully surmounted.

"I have frequently thought, and talked with our common friends upon the subject of your letter. There always occurred to us several difficulties with regard to every subject we could propose. The Ancient Greek History has several recommendations, particularly the good authors from which it must be drawn; but this same circumstance becomes an objection, when more narrowly considered: for what can you do in most places with these authors, but transcribe and translate them? No letters or state papers from which you could correct their errors, or authenticate their narration, or supply their defects. Besides, Rollin is so well wrote with respect to style, that with superficial people it passes for sufficient. There is one Dr. Leland, who has lately wrote the life of Philip of Macedon which is one of the best periods. The book, they tell me, is perfectly well wrote; yet it has had such small sale, and has so little excited the attention of the public, that the author has reason to think his labor thrown away. I have not read this book; but by the size, I should judge it to be too particular. It is a pretty large quarto. I think a book of that size sufficient for the whole History of Greece till the death of Philip: and I doubt not but such a work would be successful, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances. The subject is noble, and Rollin is by no means equal to it.

"I own, I like still less your project of the Age of Charles the Fifth. That subject is disjointed; and your hero, who is the sole connexion, is not very interesting. A competent knowledge at least is required of the state and constitution of the empire; of the several kingdoms of Spain, of Italy, of the Low Countries; which it would be the work of half a life to acquire; and, though some parts of the story may be entertaining, there would be

many dry and barren; and the whole seems not to have any great charms.

"But I would not willingly start objections to these schemes, unless I had something to propose, which would be plausible; and I shall mention to you an idea which has sometimes pleased me, and which I had once entertained thoughts of attempting. You may observe, that among modern readers, Plutarch is in every translation the chief favorite of the ancients. Numberless translations, and numberless editions, have been made of him in all languages; and no translation has been so ill done as not to be successful. Though those who read the originals never put him in comparison either with Thucydides or Xenophon, he always attaches more the reader in the translation; a proof that the idea and execution of his work is, in the main, happy. Now I would have you think of writing modern lives, somewhat after that manner: not to enter into a detail of the actions, but to mark the manners of the great personages, by domestic stories, by remarkable sayings, and by a general sketch of their lives and adventures. You see that in Plutarch the life of Cæsar may be read in half an hour. Were you to write the life of Henry the Fourth of France after that model, you might pillage all the pretty stories in Sully, and speak more of his mistresses than of his battles. In short, you might gather the flower of all modern history in this manner: The remarkable popes, the kings of Sweden, the great discoverers and conquerers of the New World; even the eminent men of letters might furnish you with matter, and the quick despatch of every different work would encourage you to begin a new one. If one volume were successful, you might compose another at your leisure, and the field is inexhaustible. There are persons whom you might meet with in the corners of history, so to speak, who would be a subject of entertainment quite unexpected; and as long as you live, you might give and receive amusement by such a work. Even your son, if he had a talent for history, would succeed to the subject, and his son to him. I shall insist no farther on this idea; because, if it strikes your fancy, you will easily perceive

all its advantages, and, by farther thought, all its difficulties."

After much deliberation, Dr. Robertson resolved to undertake the History of Charles V.; a determination not less fortunate for the public, than for his own fame; as it engaged him, unexpectedly perhaps, in a train of researches not confined to the period, or to the quarter of the globe, that he had originally in view; but which, opening as he advanced new and more magnificent prospects, attracted his curiosity to two of the greatest and most interesting subjects of speculation in the History of Human Affairs; the enterprises of modern ambition in the Western World, and the traces of ancient wisdom and arts existing in the East.

The progress of the work, however, was interrupted for some time, about a year after its commencement, by certain circumstances which induced him to listen more favorably than formerly to the entreaties of those friends who urged him to attempt a History of England. The motives that weighed with him on this occasion are fully explained in a correspondence still extant, in which there are various particulars tending to illustrate his character and his literary views.

From a letter of the late Lord Cathcart to Dr. Robertson, (dated 20th July, 1761,) the revival of this project would appear to have originated in a manner not a little flattering to the vanity of an author.

. . . . . "Lord Bute told me the king's thoughts, as well as his own, with respect to your History of Scotland, and a wish his majesty had expressed to see a History of England by your pen. His lordship assured me, every source of information which government can command would be open to you; and that great, laborious, and extensive as the work must be, he would take care your encouragement should be proportioned to it. He seemed to be aware of some objections you once had, founded on the apprehension of clashing or interfering with Mr. David Hume, who is your friend; but as your performance and his will be upon plans so different from each other, and as *his* will, in point of time, have so much the

start of yours, these objections did not seem to him such as upon reflection were likely to continue to have much weight with you. . . . . .

. . . . . "I must add that though I did not think it right to inquire particularly into Lord Bute's intentions before I knew a little of your mind, it appeared to me plain, that they were higher than any views which can open to you in Scotland, and which, I believe, he would think inconsistent with the attention the other subject would necessarily require." . . . . . .

A paper which has been accidentally preserved among the letters addressed to Dr. Robertson by his friends, enables me to state his sentiments with respect to the foregoing proposal, in his own words. It is in Dr. Robertson's hand-writing, and is marked on the back as "An imperfect Sketch of his Answer to Lord Cathcart's letter of July 20th." The following extracts contain all those parts of it which are connected with the project of the English History.

. . . . . "After the publication of the History of Scotland, and the favorable reception it met with, I had both very tempting offers from booksellers, and very confident assurances of public encouragement, if I would undertake the History of England. But as Mr. Hume, with whom, notwithstanding the contrariety of our sentiments both in religion and politics, I live in great friendship, was at that time in the middle of the subject, no consideration of interest or reputation would induce me to break in upon a field of which he had taken prior possession; and I determined that my interference with him should never be any obstruction to the sale or success of his work. Nor do I yet repent my having resisted many solicitations to alter this resolution. But the case I now think is entirely changed. His history will have been published several years before any work of mine on the same subject can appear; its first run will not be marred by any justling with me, and it will have taken that station in the literary system which belongs to it. This objection, therefore, which I thought and still think so weighty at that time, makes no impression on me at present, and I can now justify my undertaking the En-

glish History to myself, to the world, and to him. Besides, our manner of viewing the same subject is so different or peculiar, that (as was the case in our last books) both may maintain their own rank, have their own partisans, and possess their own merit, without hurting each other.

"I am sensible how extensive and laborious the undertaking is, and that I could not propose to execute it in the manner I could wish, and the public will expect, unless I shall be enabled to consecrate my whole time and industry to it. Though I am not weary of my profession, nor wish ever to throw off my ecclesiastical character, yet I have often wished to be free of the labor of daily preaching, and to have it in my power to apply myself wholly to my studies. This the encouragement your lordship mentions will put in my power. But as my chief residence must still be in Scotland, where I would choose, both for my own sake and that of my family, to live and to compose; as a visit of three or four months now and then to England will be fully sufficient for consulting such manuscripts as have never been published: I should not wish to drop all connexion with the church of which I am a member, but still to hold some station in it, without being reduced entirely to the profession of an author.

"Another circumstance must be mentioned to your lordship. As I have begun the History of Charles V. and have above one-third of it finished, I would not choose to lose what I have done. It will take at least two years to bring that work to perfection; and after that, I shall begin the other, which was my first choice, long before Mr. Hume undertook it, though I was then too diffident of myself, and too idle to make any progress in the execution of it, farther than forming some general ideas as to the manner in which it should be prosecuted.

"As to the establishment to be made in my favor, it would ill become me to say any thing. Whether the present time be a proper one for settling the matter finally, I know not. I beg leave only to say, that however much I may wish to have a point fixed so much for my

honor, and which will give such stability to all my future schemes, I am not impatient to enter into possession, before I can set to work with that particular task for which my appointments are to be given."

In a letter addressed to Mr. Baron Mure, (dated Nov. 25, 1761,) Dr. Robertson has explained himself still more fully on some points touched on in the foregoing correspondence.

"I need say no more of my reasons for not undertaking the History of England immediately after the publication of my last book, or the circumstances which induce me to think that I may now engage in it with propriety. These I have already explained, and I hope they are approved of. The only thing about which I have any difficulty is, the proposal of my residing in London with my family during the time I shall be employed in my intended work. If such a prospect had opened to me a dozen of years ago, I should have reckoned it a very fortunate accident, and would have embraced it without hesitation. But, at my time of life, accustomed to the manners of my own country, and living with ease and credit, and in good company here, I am unwilling to think of entering upon new habits, of forming new connexions and friendships, and of mingling with a society which, by what I have seen of it, I do not relish so much as that to which I am more familiar. This is the light in which, if I were still a single man, I must have viewed the matter. But in my present situation, with a wife and four children, my difficulties increase; and I must consider not only what would be agreeable to myself, but what may be of advantage to them. You know how greatly the expense of housekeeping at London exceeds that at Edinburgh, and how much the charge of educating children increases. You know with what ease women of a middling fortune mingle with good company in Edinburgh; how impossible that is in London; and even how great the expense is of their having any proper society at all. As I happen to have three daughters, these circumstances must occur to me, and have their own weight. Besides this, if it shall please God to spare my life a few years, I shall be able to

leave my family, if it continue in Scotland, in a situation more independent than I could ever expect from any success or encouragement, if they shall settle in England.

. . . . . " Were I to carve out my own fortune, I should wish to continue one of his majesty's chaplains for Scotland, but to resign my charge as a minister of Edinburgh, which engrosses more of my time than one who is a stranger to the many minute duties of that office can well imagine. I would wish to apply my whole time to literary pursuits, which is at present parcelled out among innumerable occupations. In order to enable me to make this resignation, some appointment must be assigned me for life. What that should be, it neither becomes me, nor do I pretend to say. One thing, however, I wish with some earnestness, that the thing might be executed soon, both as it will give me great vigor in my studies, to have my future fortune ascertained in such an honorable manner, and because, by allowing me to apply myself wholly to my present work, it will enable me to finish it in less time, and to begin so much the sooner to my new task."

In what manner this plan, after being so far advanced, came to be finally abandoned, I have not been able to discover. The letters from which the foregoing extracts are taken, seem to have been preserved by mere accident; and after the date of the last, I find a blank till 1763 in Dr. Robertson's correspondence with Lord Cathcart. Some letters which passed between them about that time, are now in my possession. They relate chiefly to a scheme which was then in agitation, and which was soon after accomplished, of reviving in Dr. Robertson's favor the office of historiographer for Scotland; but from various incidental passages in them, it appears clearly that he still looked forwards to a History of England as the next subject he was to undertake after that of Charles V. It is not impossible, that the resignation of Lord Bute, in 1764, may have contributed somewhat to alter his views, by imposing on him the necessity of a new negotiation through a different channel. The History of Charles V. besides,

employed him much longer than he foresaw; partly in consequence of his avocations as principal of the university, and partly of those arising from his connexion with the church, in which, at that period, faction ran high. In the execution too of this work, he found that the transactions relating to America, which he had originally intended as the subject of an episode, were of such magnitude as to require a separate narrative: and when at last he had brought to a termination the long and various labors in which he was thus involved, his health was too much impaired, and his life too far advanced, to allow him to think of an undertaking so vast in itself, and which Mr. Hume had already executed with so splendid and so merited a reputation.

The delays which retarded the publication of the History of Charles V. together with the author's established popularity as a writer, had raised the curiosity of the public to a high pitch before that work appeared; and perhaps there never was a book, unconnected with the circumstances of the times, that was expected with more general impatience. It is unnecessary for me to say, that these expectations were not disappointed; nor would it be worth while to swell this memoir with a repetition of the *eulogiums* lavished on the author in the literary journals of the day. The sentiments of his own personal friends, as expressed in the openness and confidence of a private epistolary correspondence, cannot fail to be more interesting; and I shall accordingly, on this, as on other occasions, avail myself of whatever passages in his papers appear to me to be useful, either for illustrating his literary progress, or his habits and connexions in private life.

The paragraphs which immediately follow are part of a letter from Mr. Hume, without any date; but written, as appears from the contents, while the History of Charles V. was still in the press. The levity of the style forms such a striking contrast to the character which this grave and philosophical historian sustains in his publications, that I have sometimes hesitated about the propriety of subjecting to the critcisms of the world so careless an effusion of gayety and affection. I trust,

however, that to some it will not be wholly uninteresting to enjoy a glimpse of the writer and his correspondent in the habits of private intercourse; and that to them the playful and good-natured irony of Mr. Hume will suggest not unpleasing pictures of the hours which they borrowed from business and study. Dr. Robertson used frequently to say, that in Mr. Hume's gayety there was something that approached to *infantine;* and that he had found the same thing so often exemplified in the circle of his other friends, that he was almost disposed to consider it as characteristical of genius. It has certainly lent an amiable grace to some of the most favorite names in ancient story.

> "Atqui
> Primores populi arripuit, populumque tributim—
> Quin ubi se a vulgo et scenâ in secreta remôrant
> Virtus Scipiadæ et mitis sapientia Lælî,
> Nugari cum illo et discincti ludere, donec
> Decoqueretur olus, soliti."

"I got yesterday from Strahan about thirty sheets of your history to be sent over to Suard, and last night and this morning have run them over with great avidity. I could not deny myself the satisfaction (which I hope also will not displease you) of expressing presently my extreme approbation of them. To say only they are very well written, is by far too faint an expression, and much inferior to the sentiments I feel: they are composed with nobleness, with dignity, with elegance, and with judgment, to which there are few equals. They even excel, and, I think, in a sensible degree, your History of Scotland. I propose to myself great pleasure in being the only man in England, during some months, who will be in the situation of doing you justice, after which you may certainly expect that my voice will be drowned in that of the public.

"You know that you and I have always been on the footing of finding in each other's productions *something to blame, and something to commend;* and therefore you may perhaps expect also some seasoning of the former kind; but really neither my leisure nor inclination allowed me to make such remarks, and I sincerely be-

lieve you have afforded me very small materials for them. However, such particulars as occur to my memory I shall mention. *Maltreat* is a Scotticism which occurs once. What the devil had you to do with that old-fashioned dangling word *wherewith?* I should as soon take back *whereupon*, *whereunto*, and *wherewithal.* I think the only tolerable, decent gentleman of the family is *wherein;* and I should not choose to be often seen in his company. But I know your affection for *wherewith* proceeds from your partiality to Dean Swift, whom I can often laugh with, whose style I can even approve, but surely can never admire. It has no harmony, no eloquence, no ornament; and not much correctness, whatever the English may imagine. Were not their literature still in a somewhat barbarous state, that author's place would not be so high among their classics. But what a fancy is this you have taken, of saying always *an hand*, *an heart*, *an head?* Have you *an ear?* Do you not know that this (n) is added before vowels to prevent the cacophony, and ought never to take place before (h) when that letter is sounded? It is never pronounced in these words: why should it be wrote? Thus I should say, *a history*, and *an historian;* and so would you too, if you had any sense. But you tell me, that Swift does otherwise. To be sure there is no reply to that; and we must swallow your *hath*, too, upon the same authority. I will see you d——d sooner. But I will endeavour to keep my temper.

"I do not like this sentence in page 149. *This step was taken in consequence of the treaty Wolsey had concluded with the emperor at Brussels, and which had hitherto been kept secret.* Si sic omnia dixisses, I should never have been plagued with hearing your praises so often sounded, and that fools preferred your style to mine. Certainly it had been better to have said, *which Wolsey, &c.* That relative ought very seldom to be omitted, and is here particularly requisite to preserve a symmetry between the two members of the sentence. You omit the relative too often, which is a colloquial barbarism, as Mr. Johnson calls it.

"Your periods are sometimes, though not often, too

long. Suard will be embarrassed with them, as the modish French style runs into the other extreme." . . . *

Another letter of Mr. Hume's (dated 28th March, 1769) relates to the same subject. "I find then that you are not contented without a particular detail of your own praises, and that the very short but pithy letter I wrote you gives you no satisfaction. But what can I say more? The success has answered my expectations: and I, who converse with the great, the fair, and the learned, have scarcely heard an opposite voice, or even whisper, to the general sentiment. Only I have heard that the sanhedrim at Mrs. Macaulay's condemns you as little less a friend to government and monarchy than myself." . . . . .

Mr. Walpole's congratulations on this occasion were no less warm than Mr. Hume's; but as they are expressed in more general terms, they do not supply materials equally interesting for a quotation. The only letter, besides, from Mr. Walpole relative to Charles V. that has come into my hands, was written before he had proceeded farther in the perusal than the first volume. What the impressions were which that part of the work had left upon his mind, may be judged of from the following paragraph:

"Give me leave, sir, without flattery, to observe to yourself, what is very natural to say to others. You are almost the single, certainly the greatest instance, that sound parts and judgment can attain every perfection of a writer, though it be buried in the privacy of retired life and deep study. You have neither the prejudices of a recluse, nor want any of the taste of a man of the world. Nor is this polished ease confined to your works, which parts and imitation might possibly seize. In the few hours I passed with you last summer, I was struck with your familiar acquaintance

* Considering the critical attention which Mr. Hume appears to have given to the *minutiæ* of style, it is somewhat surprising that he should himself fail so frequently both in purity and grammatical correctness. In these respects, his historical compositions will not bear a comparison with those of Dr. Robertson; although they abound, in every page, with what Mr. Gibbon calls "careless, inimitable beauties." In his familiar letters the inaccuracies are more numerous than might have been expected from one accustomed so much to write with a view to publication: nor are these negligences *always* compensated by that happy lightness and ease which he seems to have been studious to attain.

with men, and with every topic of conversation. Of your Scottish History I have often said, that it seemed to me to have been written by an able ambassador, who had seen much of affairs. I do not expect to find less of that penetration in your Charles. Why should I not say thus much to you? Why should the language of flattery forbid truth to speak its mind, merely because flattery has stolen truth's expressions? Why should you be deprived of the satisfaction of hearing the impression your merit has made? You have sense enough to be conscious that you deserve what I have said; and though modesty will forbid you to subscribe to it, justice to me and to my character, which was never that of a flatterer, will oblige you silently to feel, that I can have no motive but that of paying homage to superior abilities."

Lord Lyttleton was another correspondent with whom Dr. Robertson had occasional communications. The first of his letters was an acknowledgment to him for a present of Charles V.; and is valuable on account of its coincidence with a letter of Mr. Hume's formerly quoted, in which he recommended to Dr. Robertson to write lives in the manner of Plutarch.

"I don't wonder that your sense of the public expectation gives you some apprehensions: but I know that the historian of Mary, queen of Scots, cannot fail to do justice to any great subject; and no greater can be found in the records of mankind than this you have now chosen. Go on, dear sir, to enrich the English language with more tracts of modern history. We have nothing good in that way, except what relates to the island of Great Britain. You have talents and youth enough to undertake the agreeable and useful task of giving us all the lives of the most illustrious princes who have flourished since the age of Charles V. in every part of the world, and comparing them together, as Plutarch has done the most celebrated heroes of Greece and Rome. This will diffuse your glory as a writer, farther than any other work. All nations will have an equal interest in it; and feel a gratitude to the stranger who takes pains to immortalize the virtues of those to

whom he is only related by the general sympathy of sentiment and esteem. Plutarch was a Greek, which made him less impartial between his countrymen and the Romans in weighing their comparative merit, than you would be in contrasting a Frenchman with a German, or an Italian with a Spaniard, or a Dutchman with a Swede. Select, therefore, those great men out of different countries, whose characters and actions may be best compared together, and present them to our view, without that disguise which the partiality of their countrymen, or the malice of their enemies, may have thrown upon them. If I can animate you to this, posterity will owe me a very great obligation."

I shall close these extracts with a short letter from Voltaire, dated 26th February, 1778, from the *Château de Ferney.*

"Il y a quatre jours que j'ai reçu le beau présent dont vous m'avez honoré. Je le lis malgré les fluxions horribles qui me font craindre de perdre entiérement les yeux. Il me fait oublier tous mes maux. C'est à vous et à M. Hume qu'il appartient d'ecrire l'histoire. Vous êtes éloquent, savant, et impartial. Je me joins à l'Europe pour vous estimer."

While Dr. Robertson's fame was thus rapidly extending wherever the language in which he wrote was understood and cultivated, he had the singular good fortune to find in M. Suard, a writer fully capable of transfusing into a language still more universal, all the spirit and elegance of the original. It appears from a letter preserved among Dr. Robertson's papers, that M. Suard was selected for this undertaking, by the well known Baron d'Holbach. He has since made ample additions to his fame by his own productions; but, if I am not mistaken, it was his translation of Charles V. which first established his reputation, and procured him a seat in the French academy." *

---

* FROM BARON D'HOLBACH TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Sir, Paris, the 30th of May, 1768.

"I received but a few days ago the favor of your letter, sent to me by Mr. Andrew

The high rank which this second publication of Dr. Robertson has long maintained in the list of our English classics, is sufficient to justify the warm encomiums I have already transcribed from the letters of his friends. To the general expressions of praise, however, which they have bestowed on it, I shall take the liberty of adding a few remarks on some of those specific excellencies by which it appears to me to be more peculiarly distinguished.

Among these excellencies, a most important one arises from the address displayed by the author in surmounting a difficulty, which has embarrassed, more or less, all the historians who have attempted to record the transactions of the two last centuries. In consequence of those relations which connect together the different countries of modern Europe as parts of one great system, a general knowledge of the contemporary situation of other nations becomes indispensable to those who would fully comprehend the political transactions of any one state at a particular period. In writing the history of a great nation, accordingly, it is necessary to connect with the narrative, occasional episodes with respect to such foreign affairs as had an influence on the policy of the government, or on the fortunes of the people. To accomplish this with success, by bestowing on these digressions perspicuity and interest, without entering into that minuteness of detail which might mislead the attention of the reader from the principal subject, is unquestionably one of the most difficult tasks of an historian; and in executing this task, Dr. Robertson's

---

Stuart; I am very proud of being instrumental in contributing to the translation of the valuable work you are going to publish. The excellent work you have published already is a sure sign of the reception your History of Charles V. will meet with in the continent; such an interesting subject deserves undoubtedly the attention of all Europe. You are very much in the right of being afraid of the hackney translators of Holland and Paris; accordingly I thought it my duty to find out an able hand capable of answering your desire. M. Suard, a gentleman well known for his style in French, and his knowledge in the English language, has, at my request, undertaken the translation of your valuable book; I know nobody in this country capable of performing better such a grand design. Consequently the best way will be for your bookseller, as soon as he publishes one sheet to send it immediately *à Monsieur M. Suard, Directeur de la Gazette de France, rue St. Roche à Paris.* By means of this the sheets of your book will be translated as soon as they come from the press, provided the bookseller of London is very strict in not showing the same favor to any other man upon the continent.

I have the honor to be with great consideration," &c.

judgment and skill will not suffer by a comparison with those displayed by the most illustrious of his rivals.

In the work, however, now under our consideration, he has aimed at something more; for while he has recorded, with admirable distinctness, the transactions of a particular reign (preserving his episodes in so just a subordination to his main design, that they seldom produce any inconvenient distraction of attention or of interest) he has contrived, by happy transitions, to interweave so many of the remarkable events which happened about the same time in other parts of Europe, as to render his History of Charles V. the most instructive introduction that has yet appeared to the general history of that age. The advantage of making the transactions of a particular nation, and still more the reign of a particular sovereign, a ground work for such comprehensive views of human affairs, is sufficiently obvious. By carrying on a connected series of important events, and indicating their relations to the contemporary history of mankind, a *meridian* is traced (if I may use the expression) through the vast and crowded map of time; and a line of reference is exhibited to the mind, for marking the bearings of those subordinate occurrences, in the multiplicity of which its powers would have been lost.

In undertaking a work on a plan so philosophical in the design, but so difficult in the execution, no period, perhaps, in the history of the world, could have been more happily chosen than that which commences with the sixteenth century; in the course of which (as he himself observes) "the several powers of Europe were formed into one great political system, in which each took a station, wherein it has since remained with less alteration than could have been expected, after the shocks occasioned by so many internal revolutions and so many foreign wars."

Mr. Hume, in a letter which I had occasion already to quote, objects to him that "his hero is not very interesting;" and it must undoubtedly be acknowledged, that the characteristical qualities of his mind were less those of an amiable man than of a great prince. His

character, however, on the whole, was singularly adapted to Dr. Robertson's purpose; not only as the ascendant it secured to him in the political world marks him out indisputably as the principal figure in that illustrious groupe which then appeared on the theatre of Europe, but as it every where displays that deep and sagacious policy, which, by systematizing his counsels, and linking together the great events of his reign, inspires a constant interest, if not for the personal fortunes of the man, at least for the magnificent projects of the politician. Nor is the character of Charles, however unamiable, without a certain species of attraction. The reader who is previously acquainted with the last scenes of his enterprising and brilliant life, while he follows him through the splendid career of his ambition, can scarcely avoid to indulge occasionally those moral sympathies which the contrast awakens; and to borrow from the solitude of the cloister some prophetic touches, to soften the sternness of the warrior and the statesman.

With a view to facilitate the study of this important portion of modern history, Dr. Robertson has employed a preliminary volume in tracing the progress of society in Europe, from the subversion of the Roman empire to the era at which his narrative commences. In this instance, as well as in the first book of his Scottish History, he has sanctioned by his example a remark of Father Paul, that an historical composition should be as complete as possible in itself; exhibiting a series of events intelligible to every reader, without any reference to other sources of information. On the minuteness and accuracy of Dr. Robertson's researches concerning the state of Europe during the middle ages, I do not presume to offer an opinion. They certainly exhibit marks of very extensive and various reading, digested with the soundest judgment; and of which the results appear to be arranged in the most distinct and luminous order. At the time when he wrote, such an arrangement of materials was the grand *desideratum*, and by far the most arduous task; nor will the merit of having first brought into form a mass of information so little accessible till then to ordinary readers, be ever affected by

the controversies that may arise concerning the justness of particular conclusions. If, in some of these, he has been censured as hasty by later writers, it must be remembered how much their labors were facilitated by what he did to open a field for their minuter diligence; and that, by the scrupulous exactness with which he refers to his authorities, he has himself furnished the means of correcting his errors. One thing is certain, (and it affords no inconsiderable testimony both to the felicity of his choice in the various historical subjects he undertook, and to the extent of his researches in the investigation of facts) that the most acute and able of all his adversaries * was guided by Dr. Robertson's example in almost all his literary undertakings; and, that his curiosity has seldom led him into any path, where the genius and industry of his predecessor had not previously cleared the way.

In no part of Dr. Robertson's works has he displayed more remarkably than in this introductory volume, his patience in research; his penetration and good sense in selecting his information; or that comprehension of mind, which, without being misled by system, can combine with distinctness and taste the dry and scattered details of ancient monuments. In truth, this dissertation, under the unassuming title of an Introduction to the History of Charles V. may be regarded as an introduction to the History of Modern Europe. It is invaluable, in this respect, to the historical student; and it suggests, in every page, matter of speculation to the politician and the philosopher.

It will not, I hope, be imputed to me as a blameable instance of national vanity, if I conclude this section with remarking the rapid progress that has been made in our own country during the last fifty years, in tracing the origin and progress of the present establishments in Europe. Montesquieu undoubtedly led the way; but much has been done since the publication of his works, by authors whose names are enrolled among the members of this society. "On this interesting subject,"

* Dr. Gilbert Stuart.

says Mr. Gibbon,* "a strong ray of philosophic light has broke from Scotland in our own times; and it is with private as well as public regard, that I repeat the names of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith." It was, indeed, a subject worthy of their genius; for, in the whole history of human affairs, no spectacle occurs so wonderful in itself, or so momentous in its consequences, as the growth of that system which took its rise from the conquests of the barbarians. In consequence of these, the western parts of Europe were overspread with a thick night of superstition and ignorance, which lasted nearly a thousand years; yet this event, which had at first so unpromising an aspect, laid the foundation of a state of society far more favorable to the general and permanent happiness of the human race, than any which the world had hitherto seen; a state of society which required many ages to bring it to that condition which it has now attained, and which will probably require ages more to bestow on it all the perfection of which it seems to be gradually susceptible. By dividing Europe into a number of large monarchies, agreeing with each other in their fundamental institutions, but differing in the nature both of their moral and physical advantages; and possessing, at the same time, such measures of relative force as to render them objects of mutual respect; it multiplied the chances of human improvement; secured a mutual communication of lights among vast political communities, all of them fitted to contribute their respective shares to the common stock of knowledge and refinement; and sheltered science and civilization, till they had time to strike their roots so deep, and to scatter their seeds so wide, that their final progress over the whole globe can now be checked only by some calamity fatal to the species.

---

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. lxi.

SECTION III.

Continuation of the same Subject—History of America.

After an interval of eight years from the publication of Charles V., Dr. Robertson produced the History of America; a work which, by the variety of research and of speculation that it exhibits, enables us to form a sufficient idea of the manner in which he had employed the intervening period.

In undertaking this task, the author's original intention was only to complete his account of the great events connected with the reign of Charles V.; but perceiving, as he advanced, that a History of America, confined solely to the operations and concerns of the Spaniards, would not be likely to excite a very general interest, he resolved to include in his plan the transactions of all the European nations in the New World. The origin and progress of the British empire there, he destined for the subject of one entire volume; but afterwards abandoned, or rather suspended the execution of this part of his design, for reasons mentioned in his preface.

In the view which I have hitherto given of Dr. Robertson's literary pursuits, I have endeavoured not only to glean all the scanty information which his papers supply, concerning the progress of his studies, but to collect whatever memorials they afford of his intercourse with those, to whom he appears to have been more peculiarly attached by sentiments of esteem or of friendship. In following this plan, while I have attempted (in conformity to the precept of an eloquent critic *) to add to the interest of my narrative "by surrounding the subject of it with his contemporaries," I have aimed also to select such passages from the letters of his correspondents, as were at once calculated to illustrate the characters of the writers, and to reflect some light on that of the person to whom they are addressed. It ap-

* Abbé Maury.

peared to me to be possible to convey in this manner a livelier and juster idea of the more delicate features of their minds, than by any description however circumstantial; and at the same time, to avoid, by a proper discrimination in the selection of materials, those frivolous or degrading details, which, in the present times, are so frequently presented to the public by the indiscretion of editors. The epistolary fragments, accordingly, interwoven with my own composition, have all a reference to the peculiar object of this memoir; and I cannot help indulging a hope, that they will amply compensate, by the value they possess as authentic relics of the individuals whose friendships they record, for the trespasses they have occasioned against that unity of style which the rules of criticism enjoin.

In the farther prosecution of this subject, I shall adhere to the same general plan; without, however, affecting that minuteness of illustration which I was anxious to bestow on the first steps of Dr. Robertson's literary progress. The circle of his acquaintance, besides, was now so extended, and the congratulations which his works drew to him so multiplied, that my choice must necessarily be limited to the letters of those whose names render their judgments of men and books objects of public curiosity. The society will regret with me, that among these correspondents the name of Mr. Hume is not to be found. He died in the year 1776; the year immediately preceding that in which the History of America was published.*

---

* The following letters have no immediate connexion with the history of Dr. Robertson's Life; but, I trust, that no apology is necessary for their insertion here.

FROM MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Dear Robertson, Paris, 1st December, 1763.

"Among other agreeable circumstances, which attend me at Paris, I must mention that of having a lady for a translator, a woman of merit, the widow of an advocate. She was before very poor, and known but to few; but this work has got her reputation, and procured her a pension from the court, which sets her at her ease. She tells me, that she has got a habit of industry; and would continue, if I could point out to her any other English book she could undertake, without running the risque of being anticipated by any other translator. Your History of Scotland is translated, and is in the press: but I recommended to her your History of Charles V. and promised to write to you, in order to know when it would be printed, and to desire you to send over the sheets from London as they came from the press: I should put them into her hands, and she would by that means have the start of

Mr. Gibbon made his first appearance as an historian a few months before Mr. Hume's death, and began a correspondence with Dr. Robertson the year following.

---

every other translator. My two volumes last published are at present in the press. She has a very easy natural style: sometimes she mistakes the sense; but I now correct her manuscript; and should be happy to render you the same service, if my leisure permit me, as I hope it will. Do you ask me about my course of life? I can only say, that I eat nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe nothing but incense, and tread on nothing but flowers. Every man I meet, and still more every lady, would think they were wanting in the most indispensable duty, if they did not make to me a long and elaborate harangue in my praise. What happened last week, when I had the honor of being presented to the D——n's children at Versailles, is one of the most curious scenes I have yet passed through. The Duc de B., the eldest, a boy of ten years old, stepped forth, and told me how many friends and admirers I had in this country, and that he reckoned himself in the number, from the pleasure he had received from the reading of many passages in my works. When he had finished, his brother, the Count de P., who is two years younger, began his discourse, and informed me, that I had been long and impatiently expected in France; and that he himself expected soon to have great satisfaction from the reading of my fine history. But what is more curious; when I was carried thence to the Count d'A., who is but four years of age, I heard him mumble something, which, though he had forgot it in the way, I conjectured from some scattered words, to have been also a panegyric dictated to him. Nothing could more surprise my friends, the Parisian philosophers, than this incident. * * * * * * It is conjectured that this honor was paid me by express order from the D. who, indeed, is not, on any occasion, sparing in my praise.

"All this attention and panegyric was at first oppressive to me; but now it sits more easy. I have recovered, in some measure, the use of the language, and am falling into friendships, which are very agreeable; much more so than silly, distant, admiration. They now begin to banter me, and tell droll stories of me, which they have either observed themselves, or have heard from others; so that you see I am beginning to be at home. It is probable, that this place will be long my home. I feel little inclination to the factious barbarians of London; and have ever desired to remain in the place where I am planted. How much more so, when it is the best place in the world? I could here live in great abundance on the half of my income; for there is no place where money is so little requisite to a man who is distinguished either by his birth or by personal qualities. I could run out, you see, in a panegyric on the people; but you would suspect, that this was a mutual convention between us. However, I cannot forbear observing, on what a different footing learning and the learned are here, from what they are among the factious barbarians above mentioned.

"I have here met with a prodigious historical curiosity, the Memoirs of King James II., in fourteen volumes, all wrote with his own hand, and kept in the Scots' college. I have looked into it, and have made great discoveries. It will be all communicated to me; and I have had an offer of access to the secretary of state's office, if I want to know the despatches of any French minister that resided in London. But these matters are much out of my head. I beg of you to visit Lord Marischal, who will be pleased with your company. I have little paper remaining, and less time; and therefore conclude abruptly, by assuring you that I am, dear doctor, Yours sincerely."

FROM MR. HUME TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"My dear sir, London, 19th March, 1767.

"You do extremely right in applying to me wherever it is the least likely I can serve you or any of your friends. I consulted immediately with General Conway, who told me, as I suspected, that the chaplains to forts and garrisons were appointed by the war office, and did not belong to his department. Unhappily I have but a slight acquaintance with Lord Barrington, and cannot venture to ask him any favor: But I shall call on Pryce Campbell, though not of my acquaintance, and shall in-

A letter dated from Paris, 14th July, 1777, in acknowledgment of a present of Dr. Robertson's book, appears plainly from the contents to have been one of the first that passed between them.

"When I ventured to assume the character of historian, the first, the most natural, but at the same time the most ambitious wish which I entertained was to deserve

---

quire of him the canals through which this affair may be conducted: perhaps it may lie in my power to facilitate it by some means or other.

"I shall endeavour to find out the unhappy philosopher you mentioned, though it will be difficult for me to do him any service. He is an ingenious man, but unfortunate in his conduct, particularly in the early part of his life. The world is so cruel as never to overlook those flaws; and nothing but hypocrisy can fully cover them from observation. There is not so effectual a scourer of reputations in the world. I wish that I had never parted with that *Lixivium*, in case I should at any future time have occasion for it."

* * * * * * *

* * * "A few days before my arrival in London, Mr. Davenport had carried to Mr. Conway a letter of Rousseau, in which that philosopher says, that he had never meant to refuse the king's bounty, that he would be proud of accepting it; but that he would owe it entirely to his majesty's generosity and that of his ministers, and would refuse it if it came through any other canal whatsoever, even that of Mr. Davenport. Mr. Davenport then addressed himself to Mr. Conway, and asked whether it was not possible to recover what this man's madness had thrown away? The secretary replied, that I should be in London in a few days, and that he would take no steps in the affair but at my desire and with my approbation. When the matter was proposed to me, I exhorted the general to do this act of charity to a man of genius, however wild and extravagant. The king, when applied to, said, that since the pension had once been promised, it should be granted notwithstanding all that had passed in the interval. And thus the affair is happily finished, unless some new extravagance come across the philosopher, and engage him to reject what he has anew applied for. If he knew my situation with General Conway he probably would: for he must then conjecture that the affair could not be done without my consent.

"Fergusson's book goes on here with great success. A few days ago I saw Mrs. Montague, who had just finished it with great pleasure. I mean, she was sorry to finish it, but had read it with great pleasure. I asked her, whether she was satisfied with the style? Whether it did not savour somewhat of the country? O yes, said she, a great deal: it seems almost impossible that any one could write such a style except a Scotsman.

"I find you prognosticate a very short date to my administration: I really believe that few, but not evil, will be my days. My absence will not probably allow my claret time to ripen, much less to sour. However that may be, I hope to drink out the remainder of it with you in mirth and jollity. I am sincerely yours *usque ad aras*."

In comparing the amiable qualities displayed in Mr. Hume's familiar letters, and (according to the universal testimony of his friends) exhibited in the whole tenor of his private conduct, with those passages in his metaphysical writings which strike at the root of the moral and religious principles of our nature, I have sometimes pleased myself with recollecting the ingenious argument against the theories of Epicurus, which Cicero deduces from the history of that philosopher's life. "Ac mihi quidem, quod et ipse vir bonus fuit, et multi Epicurei fuerunt et hodie sunt et in amicitiâ fideles, et in omni vitâ constantes et graves, nec voluptate sed officio consilia moderantes, hoc videtur major vis honestatis et minor voluptatis. Ita enim vivunt quidam, ut eorum vitâ refellatur oratio. Atque ut cæteri existimantur dicere melius quam facere, sic hi mihi videntur facere melius quam dicere."

the approbation of Dr. Robertson and Mr. Hume, two names which friendship united, and which posterity will never separate. I shall not therefore attempt to dissemble, though I cannot easily express, the honest pleasure which I received from your obliging letter, as well as from the intelligence of your most valuable present. The satisfaction which I should otherwise have enjoyed in common with the public, will now be heightened by a sentiment of a more personal and flattering nature; and I shall often whisper to myself, that I have in some degree obtained the esteem of the writer whom I admire.

"A short excursion which I have made to this place during the summer months, has occasioned some delay in my receiving your letter, and will prevent me from possessing, till my return, the copy of your history, which you so politely desired Mr. Strahan to send me. But I have already gratified the eagerness of my curiosity and impatience; and though I was obliged to return the book much sooner than I could have wished, I have seen enough to convince me that the present publication will support, and, if possible, extend the fame of the author; that the materials are collected with care, and arranged with skill; that the progress of discovery is displayed with learning and perspicuity; that the dangers, the achievements, and the views of the Spanish adventurers, are related with a temperate spirit; and that the most original, perhaps the most curious portion of human manners, is at length rescued from the hands of sophists and declaimers. Lord Stormont, and the few in this capital who have had an opportunity of perusing the History of America, unanimously concur in the same sentiments; your work is already become a favorite subject of conversation, and M. Suard is repeatedly pressed, in my hearing, to fix the time when his translation will appear." *

* The letter from which the foregoing passage is extracted has been already published by Lord Sheffield in the posthumous works of Mr. Gibbon. As the copy found among Dr. Robertson's papers corresponds *verbatim* with that which Mr. Gibbon appears to have retained in his own possession, it affords a proof of the care which he bestowed on his epistolary compositions.

In most of the other letters received by Dr. Robertson on this occasion, I have not remarked any thing very interesting. Mr. Walpole is liberal, as formerly, in his praise, but does not enter so much into particular criticisms; and as for his other correspondents (among whom were various names of the first distinction in the kingdom) the greater part of them were probably restrained, by motives of delicacy, from offering any thing more than general expressions of admiration to a writer whose fame was now so fully established. A letter from William, Lord Mansfield, though it bears no marks of the superior mind of that eminent man, is valuable at least as a testimony of his respect for Dr. Robertson: nor will it, perhaps, when contrasted with the splendor of his professional exertions be altogether unacceptable to those who have a pleasure in studying the varieties and the limits of human genius.

"I delayed returning you my warmest acknowledgments for your most valuable present, till I could say that I had enjoyed it. Since my return from the circuit I have read it with infinite pleasure. It is inferior to none of your works, which is saying a great deal. No man will now doubt but that you have done judiciously in making this an entire separate work, and detaching it from the general history. Your account of the science of navigation and naval discovery is admirable, and equal to any historical map of the kind. If I knew a pen equal to it, I would advise the continuation down to the next arrival of Captain Cook. Nothing could be more entertaining or more instructive. It is curious that all great discoveries are made, as it were by accident, when men are in search of something else. I learn from you that Columbus did not, as a philosopher, demonstrate to himself that there must be such a portion of the earth as America is, but that meaning to go to the East Indies, he stumbled on the West. It is a more interesting speculation to consider how little political wisdom had to do, and how much has arisen from chance, in the peopling, government, laws, and constitution of the New World. You show it strongly in the revolutions and settlement of Spanish America.

I hope the time will come for fulfilling the engagement you allude to in the beginning of the preface. You will then show how little political wisdom had to do in forming the original settlements of English America. Government left private adventurers to do as they pleased, and certainly did not see in any degree the consequence of the object."

One letter, containing the judgment of an author who is supposed to have employed his own abilities in a very masterly sketch on the same subject, I shall publish entire. It is long for a quotation; but I shall not mutilate what comes from the pen of Mr. Burke.

"I am perfectly sensible of the very flattering distinction I have received in your thinking me worthy of so noble a present as that of your History of America. I have however suffered my gratitude to lie under some suspicion, by delaying my acknowledgment of so great a favor. But my delay was only to render my obligation to you more complete, and my thanks, if possible, more merited. The close of the session brought a great deal of very troublesome, though not important business on me at once. I could not go through your work at one breath at that time, though I have done it since. I am now enabled to thank you, not only for the honor you have done me, but for the great satisfaction, and the infinite variety and compass of instruction I have received from your incomparable work. Every thing has been done which was so naturally to be expected from the author of the History of Scotland, and of the age of Charles V. I believe few books have done more than this, towards clearing up dark points, correcting errors, and removing prejudices. You have too the rare secret of rekindling an interest on subjects that had so often been treated, and in which every thing which could feed a vital flame appeared to have been consumed. I am sure I read many parts of your history with that fresh concern and anxiety which attend those who are not previously apprised of the event. You have besides, thrown quite a new light on the present state of the Spanish provinces, and furnished both materials and hints for a

rational theory of what may be expected from them in future.

"The part which I read with the greatest pleasure is, the discussion on the manners and character of the inhabitants of that New World. I have always thought with you that we possess at this time very great advantages towards the knowledge of human nature. We need no longer go to history to trace it in all stages and periods. History, from its comparative youth, is but a poor instructor. When the Egyptians called the Greeks children in antiquities, we may well call them children; and so we may call all those nations which were able to trace the progress of society only within their own limits. But now the great map of mankind is unrolled at once, and there is no state or gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same moment under our view; the very different civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia; the erratic manners of Tartary and of Arabia; the savage state of North America and of New Zealand. Indeed you have made a noble use of the advantages you have had. You have employed philosophy to judge on manners, and from manners you have drawn new resources for philosophy. I only think that in one or two points you have hardly done justice to the savage character.

"There remains before you a great field. *Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ Tractas, et incedis per ignes Suppositos cineri doloso.* When even those ashes will be spread over the present fire, God knows. I am heartily sorry that we are now supplying you with that kind of dignity and concern, which is purchased to history at the expense of mankind. I had rather by far that Dr. Robertson's pen were only employed in delineating the humble scenes of political economy, than the great events of a civil war. However, if our statesmen had read the book of human nature instead of the journals of the house of commons, and history instead of acts of parliament, we should not by the latter have furnished out so ample a page for the former. For my part, I have not been, nor am I very forward in my speculations on this

subject. All that I have ventured to make have hitherto proved fallacious. I confess, I thought the colonies left to themselves could not have made any thing like the present resistance to the whole power of this country and its allies. I did not think it could have been done without the declared interference of the house of Bourbon. But I looked on it as very probable that France and Spain would before this time have taken a decided part. In both these conjectures I have judged amiss. You will smile when I send you a trifling temporary production, made for the occasion of a day, and to perish with it, in return for your immortal work. But our exchange resembles the politics of the times. You send out solid wealth, the accumulation of ages, and in return you get a few flying leaves of poor American paper. However, you have the mercantile comfort of finding the balance of trade infinitely in your favor; and I console myself with the snug consideration of uninformed natural acuteness, that I have my warehouse full of goods at another's expense.

"Adieu, sir, continue to instruct the world; and whilst we carry on a poor unequal conflict with the passions and prejudices of our day, perhaps with no better weapons than other passions and prejudices of our own, convey wisdom at our expense to future generations."

After these testimonies to the excellence of the American History, joined to twenty years possession of the public favor, it may perhaps be thought presumption in me to interpose my own judgment with respect to its peculiar merits. I cannot help, however, remarking (what appears still more characteristical of this than of any of Dr. Robertson's other works) the comprehensive survey which he has taken of his vast and various subject, and the skilful arrangement by which he has bestowed connexion and symmetry on a mass of materials so shapeless and disjointed. The penetration and sagacity displayed in his delineation of savage manners, and the unbiassed good sense with which he has contrasted that state of society with civilized life, (a speculation in the prosecution of which so many of his predecessors had lost themselves in vague declamation or

in paradoxical refinement) have been much and deservedly admired. His industry also and accuracy in collecting information with respect to the Spanish system of colonial policy, have received warm praise from his friends and from the public. But what perhaps does no less honor to the powers of his mind than any of these particulars is, the ability and address with which he has treated some topics that did not fall within the ordinary sphere of his studies; more especially those which border on the province of the natural historian. In the consideration of these, although we may perhaps, in one or two instances, have room to regret that he had not been still more completely prepared for the undertaking by previous habits of scientific disquisition, we uniformly find him interesting and instructive in the information he conveys; and happy, beyond most English writers, in the descriptive powers of his style. The species of description too in which he excels is peculiarly adapted to his subject; distinguished, not by those picturesque touches which vie with the effects of the pencil in presenting local scenery to the mind, but by an expression, to which language alone is equal, of the grand features of an unsubdued world. In these passages he discovers talents, as a writer, different from any thing that appears in his other publications; a compass and richness of diction the more surprising, that the objects described were so little familiarized to his thoughts, and, in more than one instance, rivalling the majestic eloquence which destined Buffon to be the historian of Nature.

After all, however, the principal charm of this, as well as of his other histories, arises from the graphical effect of his narrative, wherever his subject affords him materials for an interesting picture. What force and beauty of painting in his circumstantial details of the voyage of Columbus; of the first aspect of the new Continent; and of the interviews of the natives with the Spanish adventurers! With what animation and fire does he follow the steps of Cortes through the varying fortunes of his vast and hazardous career; yielding, it must be owned, somewhat too much to the influence of

the passions which his hero felt; but bestowing, at the same time, the warm tribute of admiration and sympathy on the virtues and fate of those whom he subdued! The arts, the institutions, and the manners of Europe and of America; but above all, the splendid characters of Cortes and of Guatimozin, enable him, in this part of his work, to add to its other attractions that of the finest contrasts which occur in history.

On these and similar occasions, if I may be allowed to judge from what I experience in myself, he seizes more completely than any other modern historian the attention of his reader, and transports him into the midst of the transactions which he records. His own imagination was warm and vigorous; and, although in the conduct of life it gave no tincture of enthusiasm to his temper, yet, in the solitude of the closet, it attached him peculiarly to those passages of history which approach to the romantic. Hence many of the characteristical beauties of his writings; and hence, too, perhaps, some of their imperfections. A cold and phlegmatic historian, who surveys human affairs like the inhabitant of a different planet, if his narrative should sometimes languish for want of interest, will at least avoid those prepossessions into which the writer must occasionally be betrayed, who, mingling with a sympathetic ardor among the illustrious personages whose story he contemplates, is liable, while he kindles with their generous emotions, to be infected by the contagion of their prejudices and passions.

These effects, resulting naturally from a warm imagination, were heightened in Dr. Robertson by the vigor of an active and aspiring mind. It was not from the indifference produced by indolence or abstraction that he withdrew from the business of life to philosophy and letters. He was formed for action no less than speculation; and had fortune opened to him a field equal to his talents, he would have preferred, without hesitation (if I do not greatly mistake his character) the pursuits of the former to those of the latter. His studies were all directed to the great scenes of political exertion; and it was only because he wanted an opportunity to

sustain a part in them himself, that he submitted to be an historian of the actions of others. In all his writings the influence of the circumstances which I have now suggested may, I think, be traced; but in none of them is it so strongly marked as in the History of America. There he writes with the interest of one who had been himself an actor on the scene; giving an ideal range to his ambition among the astonishing events which he describes.

Perhaps, indeed, it must be owned, on the other hand, that if the excellencies of this performance are on a scale commensurate to the magnitude of the subject, it is in some respects more open to censure than any of his other productions. A partiality for the charms of eloquence and the originality of system displayed in the writings of Buffon and De Pau; a partiality natural to the enthusiasm of a congenial mind, has unquestionably produced a facility in the admission of many of their assertions which are now classed with the prejudices of former times. After allowing, however, to this charge all the weight it possesses, it ought to be remembered, in justice to Dr. Robertson, what important additions have been made since the time he wrote, to our knowledge both of America and of its aboriginal inhabitants; and that it is not from our present stock of information, but from what was then current in Europe, that an estimate can fairly be formed of the extent and accuracy of his researches. When he hazarded himself, like Columbus, in traversing an unknown ocean, and in surveying a New World, much, it might be expected, would be left to reward the industry of future adventurers. The disposition he has shown to palliate or to veil the enormities of the Spaniards in their American conquests, is a blemish of a deeper and more serious nature, to the impression of which I must content myself with opposing those warm and enlightened sentiments of humanity which in general animate his writings. A late candid and well-informed author, accordingly, after asserting that the conquest of the New World was effected (on a low estimate) by the murdering of ten millions of the species, and that the

accounts of this carnage are authenticated beyond the possibility of dispute, suggests an apology for Dr. Robertson by remarking, "That this is one of those melancholy passages in the history of human nature, where a benevolent mind, shrinking from the contemplation of facts, wishes to resist conviction, and to relieve itself by incredulity."*

The Spanish nation were not insensible, of what they owed to Dr. Robertson for "the temperate spirit" (as Mr. Gibbon expresses it) with which he had related this portion of their story. "On the 8th of August, 1777, he was unanimously elected a member of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; in testimony of their approbation of the industry and care with which he has applied to the study of Spanish history, and as a recompense for his merit in having contributed so much to illustrate and spread the knowledge of it in foreign countries." The academy, at the same time, appointed one of its members to translate the History of America into Spanish; and it is believed that considerable progress had been made in the translation, when the Spanish government, judging it inexpedient that a work should be made public, in which the nature of the trade with America, and the system of colonial administration were so fully explained, interposed its authority to stop the undertaking.

As the volumes which have been now under our review did not complete Dr. Robertson's original design, he announced in the preface his intention to resume the subject at a future period; suspending, in the mean time, the execution of that part of his plan which related to the British settlements, "on account of the *ferment* which then agitated our North American Colonies." A fragment of this intended work, which has been published since his death, while it illustrates the persevering ardor of his mind, must excite a lively regret in all who read it, that a history so peculiarly calculated by its subject to co-extend his fame with the future progress of our language in the regions beyond

* Bryan Edwards—History of the West Indies.

the Atlantic, had not been added to the other monuments of his genius.

The caution which Dr. Robertson observed in his expressions concerning the American war, suggests some doubts about his sentiments on that subject. In his letters to Mr. Strahan he writes with greater freedom, and sometimes states, without reserve, his opinions of men and measures.

One or two of these passages (which I transcribe without any comment) appear to me to be objects of curiosity, as they illustrate Dr. Robertson's political views; and I flatter myself they will now be read without offence, when the factions to which they allude are almost effaced from our recollection by the more interesting events of a later period. I need scarcely premise, that in quoting Dr. Robertson's opinions I would by no means be understood to subscribe to them as my own.

In a letter, dated October 6, 1775, he writes thus: "I agree with you in sentiment about the affairs of America. Incapacity, or want of information, has led the people employed there to deceive ministry. Trusting to them, they have been trifling for two years, when they should have been serious, until they have rendered a very simple piece of business extremely perplexed. They have permitted colonies disjoined by nature and situation to consolidate into a regular systematical confederacy; and when a few regiments stationed in each capital would have rendered it impossible for them to take arms, they have suffered them quietly to levy and train forces, as if they had not known and seen against whom they were prepared. But now we are fairly committed, and I do think it fortunate that the violence of the Americans has brought matters to a crisis too soon for themselves. From the beginning of the contest I have always asserted that independence was their object. The distinction between *taxation* and *regulation* is mere folly. There is not an argument against our right of taxing, that does not conclude with tenfold force against our power of regulating their trade. They may profess or disclaim what they please, and

hold the language that best suits their purpose; but if they have any meaning, it must be that they should be free states, connected with us by blood, by habit, and by religion, but at liberty to buy and sell and trade where and with whom they please. This they will one day attain, but not just now, if there be any degree of political wisdom or vigor remaining. At the same time one cannot but regret that prosperous and growing states should be checked in their career. As a lover of mankind, I bewail it; but as a subject of Great Britain, I must wish that their dependence on it should continue. If the wisdom of government can terminate the contest with honor instantly, that would be the most desirable issue. This, however, I take to be *now* impossible; and I will venture to foretel, that if our leaders do not at once exert the power of the British empire in its full force, the struggle will be long, dubious, and disgraceful. We are past the hour of lenitives and half exertions. If the contest be protracted, the smallest interruption of the tranquillity that now reigns in Europe, or even the appearance of it, may be fatal.

"It is lucky that my American History was not finished before this event. How many plausible theories that I should have been entitled to form, are contradicted by what has now happened!"

To this extract, I shall only add a few sentences from a letter written to the same correspondent, about the affairs of America, nine years before, at the time of the repeal of the stamp act.

"I am glad to hear the determination of the house of commons concerning the stamp act. I rejoice, from my love of the human species, that a million of men in America have some chance of running the same great career which other free people have held before them. I do not apprehend revolution or independence sooner than these must and should come. A very little skill and attention in the art of governing may preserve the supremacy of Britain as long as it ought to be preserved. You can do me no favor more obliging, than that of writing me often an account of all occurrences in the debates on this affair. I am much interested in the

subject; very little in the men who act on either side. I am not weak enough greatly to admire their virtues, nor so factious as to adopt their passions."

SECTION IV.

Continuation of the same subject—Historical Disquisition concerning India—General Remarks on Dr. Robertson's merits as an Historian.

In consequence of the interruption of Dr. Robertson's plans produced by the American Revolution, he was led to think of some other subject which might, in the mean time, give employment to his studious leisure. A letter, dated July, 1778, to his friend the Rev. Mr. Waddilove (now dean of Rippon), contains some important information with respect to his designs at this period.

"The state of our affairs in North America is not such as to invite me to go on with my History of the New World. I must wait for times of greater tranquillity, when I can write and the public can read with more impartiality and better information than at present. Every person with whom I conversed in London confirmed me in my resolution of making a pause for a little, until it shall be known in what manner the ferment will subside. But as it is neither my inclination nor interest to be altogether idle, many of my friends have suggested to me a new subject, the History of Great Britain from the Revolution to the Accession of the House of Hanover. It will be some satisfaction to me to enter on a domestic subject, after being engaged so long on foreign ones, where one half of my time and labor were employed in teaching myself to understand manners, and laws, and forms, which I was to explain to others. You know better than any body how much pains I bestowed in studying the constitution, the manners, and the commerce of Spanish America. The

Review contained in the first volume of Charles V. was founded on researches still more laborious. I shall not be involved in the same painful inquiries, if I undertake the present work. I possess already as much knowledge of the British government and laws as usually is possessed by other persons who have been well educated and have lived in good company. A minute investigation of facts will be the chief object of my attention. With respect to these, I shall be much aided by the original papers published by Sir John Dalrymple and Macpherson, and lately by Lord Hardwicke. The Memoirs of Noailles, concerning the French negotiations in Spain, contain very curious information. I have got a very valuable collection of papers from the Duke of Montague, which belonged to the Duke of Shrewsbury, and I am promised the large collection of the Duke of Marlborough, which were formerly in the hands of Mr. Mallet. From these and other materials I hope to write a history which may be both entertaining and instructive. I know that I shall get upon dangerous ground, and must relate events concerning which our political factions entertain very different sentiments. But I am little alarmed with this. I flatter myself that I have temper enough to judge with impartiality; and if, after examining with candor, I do give offence, there is no man whose situation is more independent."

Whatever the motives were which induced him to relinquish this project, it is certain that it did not long occupy his thoughts. From a letter of Mr. Gibbon, it would appear to have been abandoned before the end of the year 1779. The passage is interesting, not only as it serves to ascertain the fact, but as it suggests a valuable hint with respect to a different historical subject.

"I remember a kind of engagement you had contracted to repeat your visit to London every second year, and I look forwards with pleasure to next spring, when your bond will naturally become due. I should almost hope that you would bring with you some fruits of your leisure, had I not been informed that you had totally relinquished your design of continuing Mr.

Hume's History of England. Notwithstanding the just and deep sense which I must entertain (if the intelligence be true) of our public loss, I have scarcely courage enough to blame you. The want of materials and the danger of offence are two formidable obstacles for an historian who wishes to instruct, and who is determined not to betray his readers. But if you leave the narrow limits of our island, there still remain, without returning to the troubled scene of America, many subjects not unworthy of your genius. Will you give me leave, as a vague and indigested hint, to suggest the History of the Protestants in France; the events are important in themselves, and intimately connected with the great revolutions of Europe: some of the boldest or most amiable characters of modern times, the admiral Coligny, Henry IV., &c., would be your peculiar heroes; the materials are copious, and authentic, and accessible; and the objects appear to stand at that just distance which excites curiosity without inspiring passion. Excuse the freedom, and weigh the merits (if any) of this proposal." *

As I have had very little access to see any of Dr.

---

* I have allotted this note for some letters from Mr. Gibbon to Dr. Robertson, which appeared to me likely to interest the public curiosity.

MR. GIBBON TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Bentinck Street, Nov. the 3d, 1779.

* * * * * *

"When I express my strong hope that you will visit London next spring, I must acknowledge that it is of the most interesting kind. Besides the pleasure which I shall enjoy in your society and conversation, I cherish the expectation of deriving much benefit from your candid and friendly criticism. The remainder of my first period of the Decline and Fall, &c. which will end with the ruin of the Western Empire, is already very far advanced: but the subject has already grown so much under my hands, that it will form a second and third volume in quarto, which will probably go to the press in the course of the ensuing summer. Perhaps you have seen in the papers, that I was appointed some time ago one of the lords of trade: but I believe you are enough acquainted with the country to judge, that the business of my new office has not much interrupted the progress of my studies. The attendance in parliament is indeed more laborious: I apprehend a rough session, and I fear that a black cloud is gathering in Ireland.

"Be so good as to present my sincere compliments to Mr. Smith, Mr. Fergusson, and if he should still be with you, to Dr. Gillies, for whose acquaintance I esteem myself much indebted to you. I have often considered, with some sort of envy, the valuable society which you possess in so narrow a compass. I am, with the highest regard," &c.

Robertson's answers to the letters of his correspondents, I am ignorant what reply he made to this sugges-

---

MR. GIBBON TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Dear sir, London, Sept. 1, 1783.

"Your candid and friendly interpretation will ascribe to business, to study, to pleasure, to constitutional indolence, or to any other venial cause, the guilt of neglecting so valuable a correspondent as yourself. I should have thanked you for the opportunities which you have afforded me of forming an acquaintance with several men of merit who deserve your friendship, and whose character and conversation suggest a very pleasing idea of the society which you enjoy at Edinburgh. I must at the same time lament, that the hurry of a London life has not allowed me to obtain so much as I could have wished, of their company, and must have given them an unfavorable opinion of my hospitality, unless they have weighed with indulgence the various obstacles of time and place. Mr. Stewart I had not even the pleasure of seeing; he passed through this city in his way to Paris, while I was confined with a painful fit of the gout, and in the short interval of his stay, the hours of meeting which were mutually proposed, could not be made to agree with our respective engagements. Mr. Dalzel, who is undoubtedly a modest and learned man, I have had the pleasure of seeing; but his arrival has unluckily fallen on a time of year, and a particular year, in which I have been very little in town. I should rejoice if I could repay these losses by a visit to Edinburgh, a more tranquil scene, to which yourself, and our frien Mr. Adam Smith, would powerfully attract me. But this project, which, in a leisure hour, has often amused my fancy, must now be resigned, or must be postponed at ast to a very distant period. In a very few days, (before I could receive the favor of a answer,) I shall begin my journey to Lausanne in Switzerland, where I shall x my residence, in a delightful situation, with a dear and excellent friend of that ountry; still mindful of my British friends, but renouncing, without reluctance, the ault of parliament, the hopes and fears, the prejudices and passions, of political life, which my nature has always been averse. Our noble friend Lord Loughborough endeavoured to divert me from this resolution; he rises every day in dignity a eputation, and if the means of patronage had not been so strangely reduced by o odern reformers, I am persuaded his constant and liberal kindness would more satisfy the moderate desires of a philosopher. What I cannot hope for from th vor of ministers, I must patiently expect from the course of nature; and this , which I do not view in a very gloomy light, will be terminated in due time, the death of aged ladies, whose inheritance will place me in an easy and affluen ituation. But these particulars are only designed for the ear of friendship.

"I have already espatched to Lausanne, two immense cases of books, the tools of my historical mar facture; others I shall find on the spot, and that country is not destitute of public a private libraries, which will be freely opened for the use of a man of letters. The ranquil leisure which I shall enjoy, will be partly employed in the prosecution of my history; but although my diligence will be quickened by the prospect of returning England, to publish the last volumes (three, I am afraid) of this laborious work, yet I shall proceed with cautious steps to compose and to correct, and the dryness o my undertaking will be relieved by mixture of more elegant and classical studies, more especially of the Greek authors. Such good company will, I am sure, be pleasant to the historian, and I am inclined to believe that it will be beneficial to the work itself. I have been lately much flattered with the praise of Dr. Blair, and a censure of the Abbé de Mably; both of them are precisely the men from whom I could wish to obtain praise and censure, and both these gratifications I have the pleasure of sharing with yourself. The Abbé appears to hate, and affects to despise, every writer of his own times, who has been well received by the public; and Dr. Blair, who is a master in one species of composition, has displayed, on every subject, the warmest feeling, and the most accurate judgment. I will frankly own that my pride is elated, as often as I find myself ranked in the triumvirate of British historians of the present age, and though I feel myself the Lepidus, I contemplate with pleasure the superiority of my colleagues. Will you be so good as to assure Dr. A. Smith of my regard and attachment? I consider myself as writing to both, and will not fix him for a separate answer. My direction is, 'A Monsieur Gibbon, a Lausanne en Suisse.' I shall often plume myself on the friendship of Dr. Robertson, but must I tell foreigners, that while the meaner heroes fight, Achilles has retired from the war! I am," &c.

tion of Mr. Gibbon, as well as of the circumstances that induced him to lay aside his plans with respect to the History of England. It is impossible, however, not to feel much regret that he did not carry them into execution. In spite of the obstacles which Mr. Gibbon mentions, there can be little doubt that the work would have been an important accession to English literature; and, in all probability, from the interesting nature of the subject, the most popular of his performances. The intrigues of the different factions during the reign of Queen Anne would have afforded an ample field for the exercise of his cool and discriminating judgment; the campaigns of Marlborough deserved such an historian;

MR. GIBBON TO DR. ROBERTSON.

"Lord Sheffield's, Downing Street.
March 26, 1788.

"Dear sir,

"An error in your direction (to Wimpole street, where I never had a house) delayed some time the delivery of your very obliging letter, but that delay is not sufficient to excuse me for not taking an earlier notice of it. Perhaps the number of minute but indispensable cares that seem to multiply before the hour of publication, may prove a better apology, especially with a friend who has himself passed through the same labors to the same consummation. The important day is now fixed to the eighth of May, and it was chosen by Cadell, as it coincides with the end of the fifty-first year of the author's age. That honest and liberal bookseller has invited me to celebrate the double festival, by a dinner at his house. Some of our common friends will be present, but we shall all lament your absence, and that of Dr. Adam Smith; (whose health and welfare will always be most interesting to me;) and it gives me real concern that the time of your visits to the metropolis has not agreed with my transient residence in my native country. I am grateful for the opportunity with which you furnish me of again perusing your works in their most improved state; and I have desired Cadell to despatch, for the use of my two Edinburgh friends, two copies of the last three volumes of my history. Whatever may be the inconstancy of taste or fashion, a rational lover of fame may be satisfied if he deserves and obtains your approbation. The praise which has ever been the most flattering to my ear is, to find my name associated with the names of Robertson and Hume; and provided I can maintain my place in the triumvirate, I am indifferent at what distance I am ranked below my companions and masters.

"With regard to my present work, I am inclined to believe that it surpasses in variety and entertainment at least the second and third volumes. A long and eventful period is compressed into a smaller space, and the new barbarians who now assault and subvert the Roman Empire, enjoy the advantage of speaking their own language, and relating their own exploits.

"After the publication of these last volumes, which extend to the siege of Constantinople, and comprise the ruins of Ancient Rome, I shall retire (in about two months) to Lausanne, and my friends will be pleased to hear that I enjoy in that retreat, as much repose, and even happiness, as is consistent, perhaps, with the human condition. At proper intervals, I hope to repeat my visits to England, but no change of circumstance or situation will probably tempt me to desert my Swiss residence, which unites almost every advantage that riches can give, or fancy desire. With regard to my future literary plans, I can add nothing to what you will soon read in my preface. But an hour's conversation with you, would allow me to explain some visionary designs which sometimes float in my mind; and, if I should ever form any serious resolution of labors, I would previously, though by the imperfect mode of a letter, consult you on the propriety and merit of any new undertakings. I am, with great regard," &c.

while the literature and philosophy of that memorable period would have given full employment to those critical powers which he so eminently possessed, and of which he has unfortunately left no monument behind him. The slight sketches of this kind, interspersed with the narrative of Mr. Hume's History, have always been favorite passages with readers of taste; and, if I may be permitted to judge from Dr. Robertson's conversation, he would not in this species of composition, have been surpassed by any of his contemporaries.

I have not heard of any other work that he projected after this period. He seems indeed soon to have abandoned all thoughts of writing any more for the public, and to have indulged the idea of prosecuting his studies in future for his private amusement. His circumstances were independent: he was approaching to the age of sixty, with a constitution considerably impaired by a sedentary life; and a long application to the compositions he had prepared for the press, had interfered (it is presumable) with much of the gratification he might have enjoyed, if he had been at liberty to follow the impulse of his own taste and curiosity. Such a sacrifice must be more or less made by all who devote themselves to letters, whether with a view to emolument or to fame; nor would it perhaps be easy to make it, were it not for the prospect (seldom, alas! realized) of earning by their exertions, that learned and honorable leisure which he was so fortunate as to attain. He retired from the business of the ecclesiastical courts about the same time; and, for seven or eight years, divided the hours which he could spare from his professional duties, between the luxury of reading and the conversation of his friends.

The activity of his mind, in the mean time, continued unimpaired; and the habits of study he had so long been accustomed to, gave a certain scope and connexion even to his historical recreations. To one of these, which, from its accidental connexion with some of his former works, engaged his attention more closely than his ordinary pursuits, the public is indebted for a valuable performance, of which the materials seem almost

insensibly to have swelled to a volume, long after his most intimate friends imagined that he had renounced all thoughts of the press. The Disquisition concerning Ancient India, which closed his historical labors, took its rise (as he himself informs us) "from the perusal of Major Rennell's memoir for illustrating his map of Indostan. This suggested to him the idea of examining, more fully than he had done in the introductory book to his History of America, into the knowledge which the ancients had of that country, and of considering what is certain, what is obscure, and what is fabulous, in the accounts of it which they have handed down to us." "In undertaking this inquiry," he adds, "he had originally no other object than his own amusement and instruction; but in carrying it on, and consulting with care the authors of antiquity, some facts hitherto unobserved, and many which had not been examined with proper attention, occurred; new views opened; his ideas gradually extended, and became more interesting; till at length he imagined that the result of his researches might prove amusing and instructive to others."

Such is the account given by himself of the origin and progress of a Disquisition begun in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and in twelve months brought to a conclusion; exhibiting, neverthless, in every part, a diligence in research, a soundness of judgment, and a perspicuity of method, not inferior to those which distinguish his other performances. From the nature of the subject it was impossible to render it equally amusing to ordinary readers, or to bestow on his language the same splendor and variety; but the style possesses all the characteristical beauties of his former compositions, as far as they could with propriety be introduced into a discourse, of which the general design excluded every superfluous and ambitious ornament. The observations in the *Appendix*, upon the character, the manners, and the institutions of the people of India, present a valuable outline of all the most important information concerning them, which was then accessible to the philosophers of Europe; and, if they have already lost part of their interest, in consequence of the astonishing discoveries

which have been since brought to light in Asia, by a fortunate and unexampled combination of genius, learning, and official rank, in a few individuals whose names do honor to this country; they, at least, evince that ardent and enlightened curiosity which animated the author's inquiries in his most advanced years; and afford a proof, that his mind kept pace, to the last, with the progress of historical knowledge.

In these observations, too, we may occasionally trace the influence of still higher motives; to which he has himself alluded, with an affecting solemnity, in the last sentences which he addressed to the public. "If I had aimed," says he, "at nothing else than to describe the civil polity, the arts, the sciences, and religious institutions, of one of the most ancient and most numerous races of men, that alone would have led me into inquiries and discussions both curious and instructive. I own, however, that I have all along kept in view an object more interesting, as well as of greater importance; and entertain hopes, that if the account which I have given of the early and high civilization of India, and of the wonderful progress of its inhabitants in elegant arts and useful science, shall be received as just and well established, it may have some influence upon the behaviour of Europeans towards that people. It was by an impartial and candid inquiry into their manners, that the Emperor Akber was led to consider the Hindoos as no less entitled to protection and favor than his other subjects; and to govern them with such equity and mildness, as to merit from a grateful people the honorable appellation of 'the guardian of mankind.' If I might presume to hope, that the description I have given of the manners and institutions of the people of India could contribute in the smallest degree, and with the most remote influence, to render their character more respectable, and their condition more happy, I should close my literary labors with the satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived or written in vain." *

* As Dr. Robertson received particular satisfaction from the approbation of the gentleman whose geographical researches suggested the first idea of this disquisition, I flatter myself that no apology is necessary for the liberty I take in quoting a short extract from one of his letters.

In concluding this general review of Dr. Robertson's publications, our attention is naturally led, in the first place, to the extent and variety of his historical researches. In this respect, he has certainly not been surpassed by any writer of the present times; nor would it perhaps be easy to name another, who has united to so luminous an arrangement of his materials, and such masterly skill in adorning them, an equal degree of industry and exactness in tracing them to their original sources. After a minute examination of the most disputed passages of his first performance, a late author* has ventured to pronounce him "the most faithful of historians;" and I have no doubt that this honorable appellation will be sanctioned by those who shall examine his other works with the same acuteness, accuracy, and candor.

In the art of narration too, which, next to correctness in the statement of facts, is the most essential qualification of an historian, Dr. Robertson's skill is pre-eminent: perhaps I might venture to say, that in this art, his chief and characteristical excellence as an historian consists. I do not, at present, allude merely to the richness of coloring with which he occasionally arrests the attention; but to the distinctness, perspicuity, and fulness, with which he uniformly communicates historical information; carefully avoiding every reference to whatever previous knowledge of the subject his reader may acciden-

---

FROM MAJOR RENNELL TO DR. ROBERTSON.

London, 2d July, 1791.

* * * "After reading your book twice, I may with truth say, that I was never more instructed or amused than by the perusal of it; for although a great part of its subject had long been revolving in my mind, yet I had not been able to concentrate the matter in the manner you have done, or to make the different parts bear on each other.

"The subject of the appendix was what interested the public greatly; and was only to be acquired, if at all, by the study or perusal of a great number of different tracts; a task not to be accomplished by ordinary readers.

"It gives me unfeigned pleasure to have been the instrument of suggesting such a task to you; and I shall reflect with pleasure, during my life, that I shall travel down to posterity with you; you, in your place, in the *great road* of history: whilst I keep the *side path* of geography. Since I understood the subject, I have ever thought, that the best historian is the best geographer; and if historians would direct a proper person, skilled in the principles of geography, to *embody*, as I may say, their ideas for them, the historian would find himself better served, than by relying on those who may properly be styled *map-makers*. For after all, whence does the geographer derive his materials but from the labors of the historian?" . . . .

* Mr. Laing.

tally possess. In this distinctness and perspicuity, so conspicuous in the great models of antiquity, some modern writers of unquestionable talents have failed to a degree which renders all their other merits of little value; a failure more particularly observable, since it became fashionable, after the example of Voltaire, to connect with the view of political transactions, an examination of their effects on the manners and condition of mankind, and to blend the lights of philosophy with the appropriate beauties of historical composition. In consequence of this innovation, while the province of the historian has been enlarged and dignified, the difficulty of his task has increased in the same proportion; reduced, as he must frequently be, to the alternative, either of interrupting unseasonably the chain of events, or, by interweaving disquisition and narrative together, of sacrificing clearness to brevity. By few writers of the present age has this combination of philosophy with history been more frequently attempted than by Dr. Robertson; and by none have the inconveniences which it threatens been more successfully avoided. In the former respect his merit is great; but in the latter, he may be safely proposed as a pattern for imitation.

Nor does the beauty of his narrative consist only in the luminous distinctness, and picturesque selection of his details. In a passage formerly quoted from one of Mr. Walpole's letters, it is mentioned, among the other recommendations of the History of Scotland, that, "although composed of pieces of information, each of which would make a separate memoir, yet the whole is hurried on into one uninterrupted story." The remark is just, and it points at an excellence of the highest order, conspicuous in all Dr. Robertson's publications; the continuity which unites together the different parts of his subject, in consequence of the address and felicity displayed in his transitions. It is this last circumstance which bestows on his works that unceasing interest which constitutes one of the principal charms in tales of fiction; an interest easy to support in relating a series of imaginary adventures, but which, in historical composition, evinces, more than any thing else, the hand of a master.

The attainment of these different perfections was undoubtedly much facilitated by the plan which he adopted, of throwing into the form of notes and illustrations, whatever critical or scientific discussions appeared to him to interfere with the peculiar province of history. In one of the last conversations I had with him, he mentioned this as an improvement of considerable importance in historical writing; and his final judgment on the subject will be allowed to have great weight in favor of that mode of arrangement which he adopted. On this point, I know, there is a wide diversity of opinion: nor do I think myself entitled to pronounce with confidence upon either side, where the best judges have hesitated in their decision. Our late excellent colleague, Mr. Smith, carried to such a length his partiality to the ancient forms of classical composition, that he considered every species of note as a blemish or imperfection: indicating, either an idle accumulation of superfluous particulars, or a want of skill and comprehension in the general design. Dr. Douglas, too, the present bishop of Salisbury, in a letter addressed to Dr. Robertson on occasion of his American history, appears dissatisfied with the local separation of the notes from the text; without, however, disputing the general principle on which the arrangement of his materials proceeds. "I think," says he, "that your notes and illustrations very frequently contain matter of the greatest importance to the strengthening the arguments and conclusions you adopt in the body of the book; and they are so widely separated by the mode of your publication, that the reader cannot see, at one view, the great merit of your work. Mr. Gibbon adopted this method, in imitation of your Charles V.; but I believe he has found the wishes of the public in favor of another arrangement: for I understand, in a new edition of his history which we are soon to have, the notes and illustrations are to be put at the bottom of the pages to which they refer. I know you will excuse this liberty; and very probably, as you have considered the matter more accurately than such readers as I am, you can give very substantial reasons for preferring the plan

of throwing the notes and illustrations to the end of the volume."

On a question of this sort, the suggestions of so learned and judicious a critic are undoubtedly entitled to peculiar deference: but I must be permitted to express my doubts whether he has added to their weight, by appealing to the arrangement of Mr. Gibbon; which, in this instance, has always appeared to me to be inconvenient in the extreme. In no species of writing is it agreeable to have the attention so frequently withdrawn from the text; but in historical writing it is impossible to devise a more effectual expedient for counteracting the effects of the author's art. The curious research and the epigrammatic wit so often displayed in Mr. Gibbon's notes, and which sometimes render them more amusing than even the eloquent narrative which they are meant to illustrate, serve only to add to the embarrassment occasioned by this unfortunate distribution of his materials. He seems, indeed, from a letter published in his posthumous works, to have been fully satisfied, after a trial of both plans, that the preference was due to that which, after Dr. Robertson's example, he had originally pursued. "I cannot be displeased," he observes, "with the two numerous and correct impressions which have been published for the use of the Continent at Basil in Switzerland. Of their fourteen octavo volumes, the two last include the whole body of the notes. The public importunity had forced me to remove them from the end of the volume to the bottom of the page; but I have often repented of my compliance." *

It is remarkable that no alternative should have occurred to Mr. Gibbon between placing all his notes at the bottom of the page, or collecting them all in the form of an Appendix. In the first edition of his first volume, he followed Dr. Robertson implicitly in adopting the latter method; which, although by far the more unexceptionable of the two, might be obviously improved by some limitations. Mr. Hume, in a letter to Mr. Strahan, objects to it strongly. "One is plagued with

* Vol. I. p. 178.

Gibbon's notes, according to the present method of printing the book. When a note is announced, you turn to the end of the volume, and there you often find nothing but a reference to an authority. All these authorities ought only to be printed at the margin or the bottom of the page." *

What Mr. Hume here remarks concerning references to authorities, may be extended to those short explanatory sentences, which, being intended to facilitate the reader's progress, should unquestionably be brought under his eye, at the same time with the passage they are intended to elucidate. Dr. Robertson, as well as Mr. Gibbon, seems to have overlooked this distinction between explanatory hints, and notes intended for the gratification of the curious; and hence have arisen (at least in part) those inconveniences in the technical arrangement of his volumes, of which Dr. Douglas was led to complain.

A still more important blemish, however, it must be confessed, than what this respectable correspondent has specified, is sometimes the real source of the imperfection he has remarked; I mean, that a considerable portion of the matter which is parcelled out among the notes, ought to have been incorporated with the text. Where a writer finds it necessary to enter into speculation and discussion, the whole of his argument should undoubtedly be stated at once, and not broken down into fragments, which the reader is to collect from different parts of the book. In those dissertations, therefore, which form so considerable a part both of the History of Charles V. and of America, it would perhaps have been better, if the author had adhered less closely to the plan which he has so judiciously adopted in his historical narrative. The arguments which recommend it in the latter species of composition, it is sufficiently evident, do not apply to it when introduced into the former.

After all, whoever attempts to instruct the world by any literary undertaking, whether historical or speculative, will find it necessary, for the complete satisfaction

* Gibbon's Post. Works, vol. i. p. 500.

of accurate inquiries, to engage in occasional discussions which could not be introduced into the body of the work, without digressions inconsistent with a simple and distinct arrangement; nor compressed into notes at the bottom of the page, without stopping the reader's progress and misleading his attention. No writer has been more completely aware of this than Mr. Hume, who, in all his publications, both historical and philosophical, has distinguished carefully those incidental suggestions which are necessary to prevent any hesitation about the text, from the critical disquisitions useful for satisfying men of curious research, or for obviating the doubts of more refined speculation. Dr. Robertson's subject, in all his histories excepting that of Scotland, engaged him in inquiries more open to controversy, and in arguments resting upon information less accessible to ordinary readers, than those of Mr. Hume. His proofs and illustrations, accordingly, bear a far greater proportion to the size of his volumes; but I am inclined to think that, if examined with proper attention, the arrangement of them will be found (with a few exceptions) to reflect no less honor on his taste and discernment.

The stress which Dr. Robertson himself laid on this peculiarity in his mode of composition, added to the indecision of Mr. Gibbon with respect to its propriety, will, I hope, apologize sufficiently for the minuteness with which some of the foregoing particulars are stated. The general question concerning the expediency of imitating the ancients, in limiting an author's intercourse with his readers, to what is conveyed in the text, does not seem to me to admit of discussion. Considered as sources of authentic and of accurate information, the value of the classics is infinitely diminished by this very circumstance; and few, I believe, have studied Mr. Smith's works (particularly his Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations) without regretting on some occasions, the omission of his authorities; and, on others, the digressions into which he has been led, by conforming so scrupulously to the example of antiquity.

Of Dr. Robertson's merits as an historian, so far as they are connected with the genius of the language in which he wrote, it does not become a native of this part of the island to express a decided opinion. And, accordingly, in the few remarks which I am to hazard on that subject, although I shall state my own judgment with freedom, I would be understood to write with all possible diffidence.

The general strain of his composition is flowing, equal, and majestic; harmonious beyond that of most English writers, yet seldom deviating, in quest of harmony, into inversion, redundancy, or affectation. If, in some passages, it may be thought that the effect might have been heightened by somewhat more of variety in the structure and cadence of his periods, it must be recollected that this criticism involves an encomium on the beauty of his style; for it is only where the ear is habitually gratified, that the rhythm of composition becomes an object of the reader's attention.

In comparing his turn of expression with that of the classical writers of England, a difference may, I think, be perceived; originating in the provincial situation of the country where he received his education and spent his life: and, if I am not much mistaken, the same observation may be extended, in a greater or less degree, to most of our contemporaries who have labored under similar disadvantages. I do not allude, at present, to what are commonly called *Scotticisms;* for, from these Dr. Robertson's works have been allowed, by the most competent judges, to be remarkably free; but to an occasional substitution of general or of circuitous modes of expression, instead of the simple and specific English phrase. An author who lives at a distance from the acknowledged standard of elegance, writes in a dialect different from that in which he is accustomed to speak; and is naturally led to evade, as much as possible, the hazardous use of idiomatical phrases, by the employment of such as accord with the general analogy of the language. Hence, in all the lighter and more familiar kinds of writing, the risk of sacrificing ease and vivacity,

and what Dr. Johnson calls *genuine Anglicism*,* in order to secure correctness and purity; and hence, the difficulties with which those of our countrymen have had to struggle, who have aimed at the freedom of the epistolary style, or who have attempted to catch the shadowy and fleeting forms of comic dialogue. The peculiarity in the manner of *Livy*, censured by *Asinius Pollio*, was probably of a similar description; arising less from an admixture of *Paduan* idioms than from the absence of such as marked the dialect of *Rome*. "In Tito Livio," says Quinctilian, "miræ facundiæ viro, putat inesse Pollio Asinius quandam Patavinitatem. Quare, si fieri potest, et verba omnia, et vox, hujus alumnum Urbis oleant; ut oratio Romana planè videatur, non civitate donata." †

If, however, in these and a few other respects, important advantages are possessed by those whose standard of propriety is always before them in their ordinary habits of conversation and of business, it must perhaps be granted, on the other hand, that an ear thus familiarized from infancy to phrases which it has been accustomed to retain, without any selection, or any reference to general principles, can scarcely fail to have some effect in blunting an author's discrimination between the established modes of classical expression and the accidental jargon of the day. Illustrations of this remark might be easily collected from writers of the highest and most deserved reputation; more particularly from some who have cultivated, with the greatest success, the appropriate graces of the English tongue. Even the works of Dr. Middleton, which have been often recommended to Scotchmen as the safest models for their imitation, abound with instances of colloquial language, sanctioned probably by the authority of the fashionable speakers of his time, but which, I should suppose, would now be considered as vulgarisms, by such of his countrymen as have formed their taste on the compositions either of an earlier or of a later period.

---

* "If Addison's language had been less idiomatical, it would have lost something of its genuine Anglicism." *Lives of the Poets.*

† Quinctil. l. viii. c. 1.

In guarding against these temporary modes of speech, the provincial residence of a Scotchman may sometimes have its use, by teaching him to distrust his ear as an arbiter of elegance, and to appeal on every questionable point to the practice of those whose established reputation gives the stamp of propriety to the phraseology they have employed. If his composition be deficient in ease, it may be expected not to fall under the ordinary standard in point of purity; nay, it is not impossible, that in his solicitude to avoid idiomatical phrases, he may be occasionally led to animate and ennoble his diction; or, by uncommon and fortunate combinations of words, to give to familiar ideas the charm of novelty.

The species of composition to which Dr. Robertson directed his studies, was peculiarly adapted to his local situation, by affording him an opportunity of displaying all the talents he possessed, without imposing on him a trial of his powers in those kinds of writing where a Scotchman is most likely to fail. In delineating the characters of princes, statesmen, and warriors, or in recording events that have happened on the great theatre of public affairs, a certain elevation of language is naturally inspired by the magnitude of the subject. The engaging and pathetic details of domestic life vanish before the eye which contemplates the fortunes of nations, and the revolutions of empire; and there is even a gravity of manner, exclusive of every thing familiar or flippant, which accords with our idea of him who sits in judgment on the generations that are past. It may, perhaps, be questioned by some whether Dr. Robertson has not carried to an extreme, his idea of what he has himself called the *dignity of history;* but, whatever opinion we form on this point, it cannot be disputed, that his plan of separating the materials of historical composition from those which fall under the provinces of the antiquary, and of the writer of memoirs, was on the whole happily conceived; and that one great charm of his works arises from the taste and judgment with which he has carried it into execution. Nor has he suffered this scrupulous regard to the unity of historical style to exclude that variety which was necessary

for keeping alive the reader's attention. Whenever his subject admits of being enriched or adorned by political or philosophical disquisition, by picturesque description, or by the interesting details of a romantic episode, he scruples not to try his strength with those who have excelled the most in these different departments of literature; uniformly, however, avoiding to mingle in the humble scenes of ordinary life, or to meet his rivals on any ground where he did not feel himself completely their equal.

To this systematical selection of the more regular and analogical forms of construction, is to be ascribed, in a considerable degree, his popularity among foreigners, who unite in esteeming him, not only as one of the most eloquent, but as one of the most intelligible of our writers. And it is presumable that the same circumstance will secure in his favor the suffrages of posterity, when the passing idioms generated by the capricious modes of our own times, shall be antiquated or forgotten.*

---

* Since these remarks on Dr. Robertson's style were written, I have met with some critical reflections on the same subject by Mr. Burke, too honorable for Dr. Robertson to be suppressed here, although in some particulars, they do not coincide with the opinion I have presumed to state.*

"There is a style," says Mr. Burke, in a letter addressed to Mr. Murphy on his translation of Tacitus, "which daily gains ground amongst us, which I should be sorry to see further advanced by a writer of your just reputation. The tendency of the mode to which I allude is, to establish two very different idioms amongst us, and to introduce a marked distinction between the English that is written and the English that is spoken. This practice, if grown a little more general, would confirm this distemper, such I must think it, in our language, and perhaps render it incurable.

"From this feigned manner of *falsetto*, as I think the musicians call something of the same sort in singing, no one modern historian, Robertson only excepted, is perfectly free. It is assumed, I know, to give dignity and variety to the style. But whatever success the attempt may sometimes have, it is always obtained at the expense of purity, and of the graces that are natural and appropriate to our language. It is true that when the exigence calls for auxiliaries of all sorts, and common language becomes unequal to the demands of extraordinary thoughts, something ought to be conceded to the necessities which make 'ambition virtue.' But the allowances to necessities ought not to grow into a practice. Those portents and prodigies ought not to grow too common. If you have, here and there, (much more rarely, however, than others of great and not unmerited fame) fallen into an error, which is not that of the dull or careless, you have an author who is himself guilty, in his own tongue, of the same fault, in a very high degree. No author thinks more deeply, or paints more strongly; but he seldom or ever expresses himself naturally. It is plain, that comparing him with Plautus and Terence, or the beautiful fragments of Publius

---

* It is proper for me to mention, that I have no authority for the authenticity of the following passage but that of a London newspaper, in which it appeared some years ago. I do not find, however, that it has been ever called in question.

I have only to add, that some of the foregoing observations apply more strongly to Dr. Robertson's earlier than to his later publications. In the History of Charles V., and still more in that of America, he ventures on expressions which he would not have hazarded before the establishment of his literary name; and accordingly, it may be doubted, whether, in consequence of this circumstance, he did not lose in purity of diction what he gained in ease and freedom. Perhaps, on the whole, it will be found, that of all his performances, Charles V. is that which unites the various requisites of good writing in the greatest degree. The style is more natural and flowing than that of the History of Scotland; while, at the same time, idiomatical phrases are introduced with so sparing and timid a hand, that it is easy to perceive the author's attention to correctness was not sensibly diminished. In the History of America, although it

---

Syrus, he did not write the language of good conversation. Cicero is much nearer to it. Tacitus, and the writers of his time, have fallen into that vice, by aiming at a poetical style. It is true, that eloquence in both modes of rhetoric is fundamentally the same; but the manner of handling it is totally different, even where words and phrases may be transferred from the one of these departments of writing to the other."

For this encomium on Dr. Robertson's style when considered in contrast with that of Mr. Gibbon (to whom it is presumable that Mr. Burke's strictures more particularly refer) there is unquestionably a very solid foundation; but in estimating the merits of the former as an English writer, I must acknowledge that I should never have thought of singling out among his characteristical excellences, an approach to the language of good conversation. It is indeed surprising, when we attend to the elevation of that tone which he uniformly sustains, how very seldom his turn of expression can be censured as unnatural or affected. The graces of his composition, however, although great and various, are by no means those which are *appropriate to our language;* and, in fact, he knew too well the extent and the limits of his own powers to attempt them. Accordingly he has aimed at perfections of a still higher order, the effect of which is scarcely diminished, when we contemplate them through the medium of a foreign translation.

Lord Chesterfield's judgment with respect to Dr. Robertson, while it is equally flattering with that of Mr. Burke, appears to me more precise and just. "There is a history lately come out, of the reign of Mary, queen of Scots, and her son, king James, written by one Robertson, a Scotchman, which, for *clearness*, *purity*, and *dignity*, I will not scruple to compare with the best historians extant, not excepting Davila, Guicciardini, and perhaps Livy."

May I be permitted to remark, that in the opposite extreme to that fault which Mr. Burke has here so justly censured, there is another originating in too close an adherence to what he recommends as the model of good writing, the ease and familiarity of colloquial discourse. In the productions of his more advanced years, he has occasionally fallen into it himself, and has sanctioned it by his example, in the numerous herd of his imitators, who are incapable of atoning for it, by copying the exquisite and inimitable beauties which abound in his compositions. For my own part, I can much more easily reconcile myself, in a grave and dignified argument, to the *dulcia vitia* of Tacitus and of Gibbon, than to that affection of *cant* words and allusions which so often debases Mr. Burke's eloquence, and which was long ago stigmatized by Swift as "the most ruinous of all the corruptions of a language."

contains many passages, equal if not superior to any thing else in his writings, the composition does not seem to me to be so uniformly polished as that of his former works; nor does it always possess, in the same degree, the recommendations of conciseness and simplicity.

SECTION V.

Review of the more active Occupations of Dr. Robertson's Life—Conclusion of the Narrative—Sketch of his Character.

In reviewing the History of Dr. Robertson's Life, our attention has hitherto been confined to those pursuits which formed the habitual occupation of his mind; and which have left behind them unperishable monuments. His life, however, was not devoted wholly to the cultivation of letters. His talents fitted him in an eminent degree for the business of the world; and the station in which Providence placed him opened to him a field, which, however unequal to his ambition or to his genius, afforded him the means of evincing what he might have accomplished, if his sphere of exertion had been more extensive and brilliant.

Among the active scenes in which he had an opportunity to engage, the most conspicuous was presented to him by the supreme ecclesiastical court in Scotland. Of the constitution of this court, accordingly, which differs in some remarkable particulars from the clerical convocations in other Christian countries, a general outline is necessary, in order to convey a just idea of the abilities which secured to him, for a long course of years, an unrivalled influence in guiding its deliberations.*

---

* For the materials both of this outline and of the subsequent view of Dr. Robertson's system of ecclesiastical policy, I am indebted to a paper drawn up (at the request of Dr. Robertson's son) by the Rev. George Hill, D. D. principal of St. Mary's college in the university of St. Andrew's; a gentleman intimately connected with Dr. Robertson by friendship, and highly respected by him for the talents and

"The general assembly of the church of Scotland is composed of representatives from the presbyteries; from the royal boroughs; from the four universities; and from the Scots' church of Campvere in Holland. The presbyteries send two hundred and ninety members, of whom two hundred and one are ministers, and eighty-nine lay-elders; the royal boroughs send sixty-seven members, all of whom are laymen; the universities send five members, who may be either laymen, or ministers holding an office in the university; and the church of Campvere sends two members, one minister and one lay-elder. The whole number is three hundred and sixty-four, of whom two hundred and two are ministers, and one hundred and sixty-two laymen; including in the latter class the members from the universities. The annual sittings of the assembly continue only for ten days; but a committee of the whole house (called the commission) has four stated meetings in the year, for the despatch of whatever business the general assembly has been unable to overtake." *

In subordination to this supreme court, there is a series of inferior judicatories, rising, one above another, in authority. The lowest of these is the *kirk-sessions*,

---

eloquence which he has for many years displayed in the ecclesiastical courts. In general I have transcribed Dr. Hill's words, taking the liberty occasionally to make such slight alterations on the language as were necessary for preserving some degree of uniformity in the style of my narrative; and a few retrenchments, which the plan of this memoir rendered unavoidable. That the public, however, may not lose any part of so valuable a communication, I have inserted in a note, the paragraphs which are here omitted.

As Dr. Hill's paper was submitted to the examination, and received the unqualified approbation of three of Dr. Robertson's most confidential friends,* it may be regarded as an authentic statement of his general principles of church government. For the sake of connexion, I have adopted into this section such parts of it as seemed to me to be necessary for completing the history of his life; abstaining, however, scrupulously from hazarding any ideas of my own, on the subject to which it relates.

* "The mixture of ecclesiastical and lay-members in the church courts is attended with the happiest effects. It corrects that *esprit de corps* which is apt to prevail in all assemblies of professional men. It affords the principal nobility and gentry of Scotland an opportunity of obtaining a seat in the general assembly when any interesting object calls for their attendance; and although in the factious and troublesome times which our ancestors saw, the general assembly, by means of this mixture, became a scene of political debate, this accidental evil is counterbalanced by permanent good: for the presence of those lay-members of high rank, whose names are usually found upon the roll of the assembly, has a powerful influence in maintaining that connexion between church and state, which is necessary for the peace, security, and welfare of both." †

---

* Drs. Blair, Carlyle, and Grieve. † MS. of Dr. Hill.

or parochial consistories; composed of the ministers, together with the lay-elders of their respective parishes. The ministers of a number of contiguous parishes, together with certain representatives from the kirk-sessions, form a *presbytery;* and a plurality of presbyteries (differing in number according to accidental circumstances) form a provincial *synod.*

While the constitution of the Scottish church admits of no superiority of one minister above another, it requires from all its individual members, and from all its inferior judicatories, strict obedience to those who are placed in authority over them. Every court is bound to lay the record of all its proceedings from time to time before the tribunal which is its immediate superior; any part of its proceedings may be brought, by appeal or complaint, under the review of a higher jurisdiction; and every minister, when he receives orders, comes under a solemn engagement, "to assert, maintain, and defend the doctrines, discipline, and government of the church; and never to attempt any thing, directly or indirectly, which may tend to its subversion or prejudice."

In consequence of this subordination of judicatories, the general assembly determines, as the court of last resort, all the causes brought under its review, and has the power of enforcing, without control, obedience to its decrees. It possesses also extensive legislative powers, as it may, with the concurrence of a majority of presbyteries, enact laws for the government of the whole church.

By the act of 1592, which gave a legal establishment to the form of church government now delineated, the patron of a vacant parish was entitled to present to the presbytery a person properly qualified; and the presbytery were required, after subjecting the presentee to certain trials and examinations, of which they were constituted the judges, "to ordain and settle him as minister of the parish, provided no relevant objection should be stated to his life, doctrine, and qualifications." This right of presentation, however, although conferred by the fundamental charter of presbyterian government in Scotland, was early complained of as a grievance; and

accordingly, it was abolished by an act passed under the usurpation. At the restoration it was again recovered, but it was retained only for a few years; the revolution having introduced a new system, which vested the right of election in the heritors, elders, and heads of families in the parish. The 10th of Queen Anne at last restored the rights of patrons, but the exercise of these rights was found to be so extremely unpopular, that ministers were generally settled, till after the year 1730, in the manner prescribed by the act of King William.

During this long period, an aversion to the law of patronage took deep root in the minds of the people; and the circumstances of the times were such as to render it inexpedient for the church courts to contend with a prejudice so inveterate and universal.

When the presbyterian establishment fell a sacrifice to the policy introduced at the restoration, the ministers who refused to conform to prelacy were ejected from their churches, and underwent a severe persecution. The firmness which they displayed on this occasion exhibits a strength of character which has never been surpassed; but their situation, while deprived of the countenance of law, and left entirely to the guidance of private conscience, was necessarily such, as to inspire *independent* principles inconsistent with regular subordination and discipline; and, accordingly, at the revolution, when the presbyterian government was re-established, and many of the ejected ministers restored to their pulpits, they brought along with them into the church a spirit scarcely compatible with the connexion in which it stood with the paramount authority of the state. Their successors, trained in the same sentiments, saw the right of patronage revived in times which they regarded with a jealous eye; and, without allowing themselves to weigh the expediency of that mode of settlement, they considered it as an appendage of episcopacy which it was the duty of every good presbyterian to oppose. While the people, therefore, resisted with violence the first attempt which was made about the year 1730 to exercise this right, the church courts, although they could not entirely disregard the law, con-

trived, in many instances, to render it ineffectual; and sanctioned by their authority the prevailing prejudices against it. They admitted it as an incontrovertible principle in presbyterian church government, that a presentee, although perfectly well qualified, and unexceptionable in life and doctrine, was nevertheless inadmissible to his clerical office, till the concurrence of the people who were to be under his ministry had been regularly ascertained. The form of expressing this concurrence was by the subscription of a paper termed a *Call;* which was considered as a step so indispensable towards constituting the pastoral relation, that the church-courts, when dissatisfied with it as an expression of the general wishes of the parish, sometimes set aside the presentee altogether; and when they did authorize a settlement, proceeded in a manner which sufficiently implied a greater respect for the call than for the presentation.

The circumstances understood to be necessary for constituting an adequate *call*, were unsusceptible of a precise definition. The unanimous consent of landholders, elders, and heads of families, was seldom to be looked for; nor was even an absolute majority considered as indispensable, if the concurrence afforded a reasonable prospect of an harmonious and useful settlement. This principle of decision was so vague in itself, and so arbitrary in its application, that much was left in the church-courts to the private judgment of individuals, and much to their prejudices and passions; while the people, finding that a noisy and strenuous opposition seldom failed of success, were encouraged to prosecute their object by tumult and violence. Many of the clergy considering it as a matter of conscience not to take any share in the settlement of an obnoxious presentee, refused on such occasions to carry into execution the orders of their superiors; and, such was the temper of the times, that the leading men of the assembly, although they wished to support the law of the land, found themselves obliged to have recourse to expedients; imposing slight censures on the disobedient, and appointing special committees (whom it was found some-

times necessary to protect by a military force) to discharge the duties which the others had declined.

Measures of this kind, pursued with little variation for about twenty years, had so relaxed the discipline of the church, that individuals openly claimed it as a right to disobey its sentences, whenever their disobedience was justified, according to the best of their judgment, by a principle of conscience.

Such was the state of the ecclesiastical establishment in Scotland when Dr. Robertson and his friends began to take an active share in its business. Dissatisfied with the system adopted by his predecessors, and convinced that the more free any constitution is, the greater is the danger of violating its fundamental laws, his vigorous and enlightened mind suggested to him the necessity of opposing more decisive measures to these growing disorders, and of maintaining the authority of the church by enforcing the submission of all its members. The two capital articles by which he conceived presbytery to be distinguished from every other ecclesiastical establishment, was the parity of its ministers, and the subordination of its judicatories. "Wherever there is a subordination of courts," as he has himself observed in an authentic document of his ecclesiastical principles, "there is one court that must be supreme; for subordination were in vain, if it did not terminate in some last resort. Such a supreme judicature is the general assembly of the church of Scotland; and therefore, if its decisions could be disputed and disobeyed by inferior courts with impunity, the presbyterian constitution would be entirely overturned. On this supposition, there is no occasion for the church of Scotland to meet in its general assemblies any more; its government is at an end; and it is exposed to the contempt and scorn of the world, as a church without union, order, or discipline; destitute of strength to support its own constitutions, and falling into ruins by the abuse of liberty."

A question which came under the consideration of the assembly in the year 1751, when he spoke for the first time in that supreme court, afforded him an opportunity of unfolding his general principles of ecclesiasti-

cal government. The conduct of a clergyman, who had disobeyed a sentence of a former assembly, gave rise to a warm discussion; in the course of which, Dr. Robertson, supported by a few of his friends, contended for the expediency of a severe and exemplary sentence. But this doctrine was then so little understood or relished, that he was left in an inconsiderable minority.

The *commission* of that assembly, at their meeting, in November, 1751, ordered the presbytery of Dunfermline, which had already been guilty of disobedience, to admit Mr. Richardson as minister of Inverkeithing; intimating to them, at the same time, that in case of their continued contumacy, the commission was to proceed, at their next meeting in March, to a very high censure. The presbytery again disobeyed; and yet the commission, with a preposterous lenity, suffered their conduct to pass with impunity. The inconsistency and inexpediency of this sentence were urged strenuously by Dr. Robertson and his friends, who in their *dissent*, or protest against it, have left a valuable record of the general principles on which they acted. The paper is still extant, and though evidently a hasty composition, bears, in various passages, the marks of Dr. Robertson's hand.*

---

* The paper referred to in the text is entitled "Reasons of Dissent from the Judgment and Resolution of the Commission, March 11. 1752, resolving to inflict no Censure on the Presbytery of Dunfermline for their Disobedience in relation to the Settlement of Inverkeithing." It is subscribed by Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Mr. John Home, and a few of their friends. I shall subjoin the two first articles.

"Because we conceive this sentence of the commission to be inconsistent with the nature and first principles of society. When men are considered as individuals, we acknowledge that they have no guide but their own understanding, and no judge but their own conscience. But we hold it for an undeniable principle, that as members of Society, they are bound in many instances to follow the judgment of the society. By joining together in society, we enjoy many advantages, which we could neither purchase nor secure in a disunited state. In consideration of these, we consent that regulations for public order shall be established; not by the private fancy of every individual, but by the judgment of the majority, or of those with whom the society has consented to intrust the legislative power. Their judgment must necessarily be absolute and final, and their decisions received as the voice and instruction of the whole. In a numerous society it seldom happens that all the members think uniformly concerning the wisdom and expedience of any public regulation; but no sooner is that regulation enacted, than private judgment is so far superseded, that even they who disapprove it, are notwithstanding bound to obey it, and to put it in execution if required; unless in a case of such gross iniquity and manifest violation of the original design of the society as justifies resistance to the supreme power, and makes it better to have the society dissolved than to submit to established iniquity. Such extraordinary cases we can easily conceive there may be, as will give any man a just title to seek the dissolution of the society to which he belongs, or at least will

Dr. Robertson argued this cause in the general assembly, 1752; and, such was the impression made by the argument contained in the protest, and more fully

---

fully justify his withdrawing from it. But as long as he continues in it, professes regard for it, and reaps the emoluments of it, if he refuses to obey its laws, he manifestly acts both a disorderly and dishonest part: he lays claim to the privileges of the society while he contemns the authority of it; and by all principles of equity and reason is justly subjected to its censures. They who maintain that such disobedience deserves no censure, maintain, in effect, that there should be no such thing as government and order. They deny those first principles by which men are united in society; and endeavour to establish such maxims, as will justify not only licentiousness in ecclesiastical, but rebellion and disorder in civil government. And therefore, as the reverend commission have by their sentence declared, that disobedience to the supreme judicature of the church neither infers guilt nor deserves censure; as they have surrendered a right essential to the nature and subsistence of every society; as they have (so far as lay in them) betrayed the privileges and deserted the orders of the constitution; we could not have acted a dutiful part to the church, nor a safe one to ourselves, unless we had dissented from this sentence; and craved liberty to represent to this venerable assembly that this deed appears to us to be manifestly beyond the powers of a commission.

2. "Because this sentence of the commission, as it is subversive of society in general, so, in our judgments, it is absolutely inconsistent with the nature and preservation of ecclesiastical society in particular. The characters which we bear, of ministers and elders of this church, render it unnecessary for us to declare, that we join with all protestants in acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be the only King and Head of his church. We admit that the church is not merely a voluntary society, but a society founded by the laws of Christ. But to his laws we conceive it to be most agreeable, that order should be preserved in the external administration of the affairs of the church. And we contend, in the words of our *confession of faith*, 'That there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and the government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and christian prudence according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.' It is very evident that unless the church were supported by continual miracles, and a perpetual and extraordinary interposition of Heaven, it can only subsist by those fundamental maxims by which all society subsists. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. There can be no union, and by consequence there can be no society, where there is no subordination; and therefore, since miracles are now ceased, we do conceive that no church or ecclesiastical society can exist without obedience required from its members, and enforced by proper sanctions. Accordingly, there never was any regularly constituted church in the christian world, where there was not at the same time some exercise of discipline and authority. It has indeed been asserted, 'That the censures of the church are never to be inflicted, but upon open transgressors of the laws of Christ himself; and that no man is to be construed as an open transgressor of the laws of Christ for not obeying the commands of any assemby of fallible men, when he declares it was a conscientious regard to the will of Christ that led him to this disobedience.' This is called asserting liberty of conscience, and supporting the rights of private judgment; and upon such reasonings the reverend commission proceeded in coming to that decision of which we now complain. But we think ourselves called on to say, and we say it with concern, that such principles as these appear to us calculated to establish the most extravagant maxims of independency, and to overthrow from the very foundation that happy ecclesiastical constitution which we glory in being members of, and which we are resolved to support. For upon these principles, no church whatever, consisting, as every church on earth must consist, of *fallible* men, has a right to inflict any censure on any disobedient person. Let such person only think fit boldly to use the name of conscience, and sheltered under its authority, he acquires at once a right of doing whatsoever is good in his own eyes. If anarchy and confusion follow, as no doubt they will, there is, it seems, no remedy. We are sorry to say, that brethren who profess to hold such principles, ought to have acted more consistently with them, and not to have joined themselves to any church till once they had found out an assembly of *infallible* men, to whose authority they

illustrated in his speech, that the supreme court reversed the judgment of the commission, and deposed one of the ministers of the presbytery of Dunfermline, for disobeying the orders of his superiors.

This decision was the complete triumph of the principles for which Dr. Robertson and his friends had struggled. It put an end to those temporary expedients and devices which had hitherto been adopted in the settlement of parishes: it put an end to those extraordinary committees which assemblies had been in use to appoint for relieving disobedient presbyteries from their duty; and it administered to the inferior judicatories, as well as to individuals, an useful lesson of that subordination which the peace of society requires.

The success of these attempts had probably some effect in determining Dr. Robertson to continue his attention to the affairs of the church; more especially after his office in the university put it in his power to be returned annually as a representative to the general assembly. By an uninterrupted attendance in that court for nearly twenty years, he acquired an intimate acquaintance with the whole train of its business; while the influence which he thus secured was increased and con-

---

would have acknowledged submission to be due. We allow to the right of private judgment all the extent and obligation that reason or religion require; but we can never admit, that any man's private judgment gives him a right to disturb, with impunity, all public order. We hold, that as every man has a right to judge for himself in religious matters, so every church or society of christians, has a right to judge for itself, what method of external administration is most agreeable to the laws of Christ, and no man ought to become a member of that church, who is not resolved to conform himself to its administration. We think it very consistent with conscience for inferiors to disapprove, in their own mind, of a judgment given by a superior court, and yet to put that judgment in execution as the deed of their superiors for conscience' sake; seeing we humbly conceive it is, or ought to be, a matter of conscience with every member of the church, to support the authority of that church to which he belongs. Church censures are declared by our *confession of faith* to be 'necessary, not only for gaining and reclaiming the offending brethren, but also for deterring of others from the like offences, and for purging out the leaven which might leaven the whole lump.' What these censures are, and what the crimes against which they are directed, is easily to be learned from the constitution of every church, and whoever believes its censure to be too severe, or its known orders and laws to be in any respect iniquitous, so that he cannot in conscience comply with them ought to beware of involving himself in sin by entering into it; or, if he hath rashly joined himself, he is bound as an honest man and a good christian, to withdraw, and to keep his conscience clear and undefiled. But, on the other hand, if a judicature, which is appointed to be the guardian and defender of the laws and orders of the society, shall absolve them who break their laws, from all censure, and by such a deed encourage and invite to future disobedience, we conceive it will be found, that they have exceeded their powers, and betrayed their trust in the most essential instance."

firmed by his conciliating manners; by the charms of his conversation; and by the celebrity of his name. He had the happiness also of being warmly supported by most of the friends who joined him in the assembly, 1751; and who, without any jealousy of the ascendant which he possessed, arranged themselves with cordiality under his standard. The period from his appointment as principal of the university till his retreat from public life, came, accordingly, to be distinguished by the name of Dr. Robertson's *administration:* a name which implied, not any appointment from government, nor any power in the distribution of favors; but merely the weight he derived from the confidence of a great majority of his brethren, who approved of the general principles on which he acted.

The circumstances which chiefly distinguished his system of policy were, 1. a steady and uniform support of the law of patronage; and 2. an impartial exercise of the judicial power of the church.*

---

* "Dr. Robertson's system with respect to the law of patronage proceeded on the following principles: That as patronage is the law of the land, the courts of a national church established and protected by law, and all the individual ministers of that church are bound, in as far as it depends upon exertions arising from the duties of their place, to give it effect: that every opposition to the legal rights of patrons tends to diminish that reverence which all the subjects of a free government ought to entertain for the law; and that it is dangerous to accustom the people to think that they can elude the law or defeat its operation, because success in one instance leads to greater licentiousness. Upon these principles Dr. Robertson thought that the church courts betrayed their duty to the constitution, when the spirit of their decisions, or negligence in enforcing obedience to their orders, created unnecessary obstacles to the exercise of the right of patronage, and fostered in the minds of the people the false idea that they have a right to choose their own ministers, or even a negative upon the nomination of the patron. He was well aware that the subjects of Great Britain are entitled to apply in a constitutional manner for the repeal of every law which they consider as a grievance. But while he supported patronage as the existing law, he regarded it also as the most expedient method of settling vacant parishes. It did not appear to him that the people are competent judges of those qualities which a minister should possess in order to be a useful teacher either of the doctrines of pure religion, or of the precepts of sound morality. He suspected, that if the probationers of the church were taught to consider their success in obtaining a settlement as depending upon a popular election, many of them would be tempted to adopt a manner of preaching more calculated to please the people than to promote their edification. He thought that there is little danger to be apprehended from the abuse of the law of patronage, because the presentee must be chosen from amongst those whom the church itself had approved of, and has licensed as qualified for the office of the ministry; because a presentee cannot be admitted to the benefice, if any relevant charge as to his life or doctrine be proved against him: and because, after ordination and admission, he is liable to be deposed for improper conduct. When every possible precaution is thus taken to prevent unqualified persons from being introduced into the church, or those who afterwards prove unworthy from remaining in it, the occasional evils and abuses from which no human institution is exempted, could not, in the opinion of Dr. Robertson, be fairly urged as reasons against the law of patronage."

In the former of these respects, his exertions are supposed by his friends, not only to have produced in the ecclesiastical establishment a tranquillity unknown in former times; but to have contributed, in no small degree, to the peace and good order of the country. The public language of the church seems to bear testimony to the prevalence of these ideas. For a long series of years annual instructions had been given to the *commission*, "to make due application to the king and parliament, for redress of the grievance of patronage, in case a favorable opportunity for doing so should occur." But these instructions were omitted in 1784, soon after Dr. Robertson retired from the business of the assembly; and they have never since been renewed.

A systematical regularity, to which the church of Scotland had been little accustomed, in the exercise of its judicial power, was another effect of the ascendant which Dr. Robertson possessed in the conduct of its business.

A court so popular in its constitution as the general assembly, is but ill calculated for the patient and dispassionate investigation necessary for the administration of justice. As its annual sittings, too, continue only for a few days, its mode of procedure (irregular and loose as it is in many respects) is very imperfectly understood by the great majority of clerical members, who

---

* * * * * * * * *

"Such was the system, which, in conjunction with the friends of his youth, Dr. Robertson ably supported for thirty years after his first appearance in the general assembly. In speaking upon a particular question, he sometimes gave the outlines of this system for the satisfaction of the house in general, and the instruction of the younger members. The decisions which for a long course of years he dictated, form a common law of the church in which the system is unfolded. His conversation imprinted upon the minds of those who were admitted to it during the course of the assembly, the principles which pervaded his decisions: and thus were diffused throughout the church the rational and consistent ideas of presbyterian government, upon which he and his friends uniformly acted.

"These ideas continue to direct the general assemblies of the church of Scotland. For although it is not likely that any member of that house will ever possess the unrivalled, undisputed influence with his brethren, to which peculiar advantages of character and situation conducted Dr. Robertson, his principles are so thoroughly understood, and so cordially approved by the great majority of the church of Scotland, that by means of that attention to the business and forms of the house which is paid by some of his early friends who yet survive, and by a succession of younger men trained in his school, the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland proceed on the same orderly, systematical plan which was first introduced by the ability, the prudence, the firmness, the candor, and moderation which he displayed upon every occasion."

enjoy a seat in it only once in four or five years: hence, an inattention to forms; and a disposition to undervalue their importance, when they appear to stand in the way of immediate expediency. To correct, as far as possible, this unfortunate bias, inherent in the constitution of all popular tribunals, Dr. Robertson felt it to be his duty to employ all his abilities; convinced, that a wise and impartial administration of justice can only be effectually secured by a strict adherence to established rules. A complete acquaintance with these, which he soon acquired from his regular attendance on the deliberations of the assembly, gave him a decided superiority over those who were only occasionally members; and he was enabled gradually to enforce their strict observance, by the confidence which was generally reposed in his principles and his talents.

Such were the objects which Dr. Robertson had in view as an ecclesiastical leader, and which he prosecuted, during thirty years, with so great steadiness and success, that not only the system introduced by him continues still in vigor, but the decisions which he dictated form a sort of "*common law* of the church." * With respect to the various incidental discussions in which he was, on different occasions, called on to take an active concern, it is impossible for me to enter into details. One of these, however, which occurred towards the close of his public life, is of too memorable a nature to be passed over in silence.

The disturbances occasioned in Scotland in 1779, by the proposed extension to that part of the kingdom of the repeal of the penal laws against Roman catholics, are well known to all who have the slightest acquaintance with the history of that period; and are still fresh in the recollection of the greater part of this society. Some of us too are able to bear testimony, from what fell under our own immediate observation, to the firmness and tranquillity which Dr. Robertson displayed at a very critical juncture; when, after repeated acts of successful and unpunished outrage, committed in different

* Thus far I have availed myself of Dr. Hill's communication. A more full illustration of some of the particulars here stated, will be found in the notes.

parts of this city, a furious populace threatened an attack on his house, and were only restrained by a military force, from sacrificing his life to their vengeance.

The leading principles which on that occasion directed his conduct in the church courts, will be best understood from a statement of facts, which formed part of one of his speeches in the subsequent assembly.*

"The first intimation I had of any intention to grant relief to papists from the rigor of penal statutes, was in the newspapers. Though I had observed with pleasure, the rapid progress of liberal sentiments in this enlightened age; though I knew that science and philosophy had diffused the spirit of toleration through almost every part of Europe; yet I was so well acquainted with the deep-rooted aversion of Britons to the doctrines and spirit of popery, that I suspected this motion for giving relief to papists to be premature. I was afraid, on the one hand, that the liberal sentiments of those by whom it was made might induce them to grant too much. I dreaded, on the other, that past offences might be imputed to the catholics of the present age, and exclude them from that degree of indulgence, which I considered as no less beneficial to the nation, than suitable to the spirit of the gospel. But when I observed the uncommon unanimity with which the bill was carried through both houses; when I saw ministry and opposition vying with each other in activity to forward it; when I beheld that respectable body who assume to themselves the distinguishing appellation of *old whigs* taking the lead avowedly in supporting it; when I observed a bench of bishops, of whom I may justly say, that, in learning, in decency of manners, and in zeal for the protestant religion, they are not inferior to any of their predecessors, co-operating heartily with the other promoters of that bill, my curiosity to know precisely the nature and extent of the indulgence granted became

* The following extract is transcribed, with some trifling verbal corrections, from an account of the proceedings of the general assembly, published in the Scots' Magazine for 1779. As the account in general (I am assured) is executed with correctness and impartiality, the *substance* of Dr. Robertson's speech may be presumed to be faithfully stated; but, in other respects, ample allowances must be made for the inaccuracies to be expected from an anonymous reporter, writing (as is probable) from memory, or from imperfect notes.

very great. Upon perusing the bill itself, all my apprehensions vanished; the relief given to papists appeared neither too great nor too little. By the statute of last session, no political power is conferred on papists. They are not entitled to hold any public office. They can neither elect, nor be elected members of any corporation; far less can they choose, or be chosen, members of the house of commons. In consequence of this statute, an English papist has not acquired the privileges of a citizen; he is restored only to the rights of a man. By a law passed in a season of jealousy, alarm, and faction, papists were rendered incapable of inheriting property by succession or conveyance, of transmitting it to others, or of acquiring it by purchase; and the ecclesiastics of that religion who should take upon them the education of youth, were to be punished with perpetual imprisonment. It is from these penalties and disabilities alone, that they are now relieved. They may now inherit, they may devise, they may purchase. Formerly they were in a state of proscription and incapacity: now they are rendered what the law calls *personæ;* capable of legal functions in the possession and disposal of their own property. Nor are these concessions gratuitous. Before a papist can enjoy the benefit of them, he must swear allegiance to our gracious sovereign; he must abjure the pretender; he must reject as an impious position, that it is lawful to murder or destroy any person under pretence of their being heretics; he must declare it to be an unchristian principle that faith is not to be kept with heretics; he must disclaim the power of the pope to dispense with the obligation of an oath; he must swear, that it is no article of his faith, that a pope or council can either depose princes, or exercise any civil or temporal jurisdiction within this realm: in short, he must give every security that the most scrupulous anxiety could devise, to demean himself as a loyal and peaceable subject. These slender rights, the lowest a man can claim or enjoy in a social state, are the amount of all the mighty and dreaded acquisitions made by papists in virtue of this law. I rejoiced in the temperate wisdom of the legislature,

and foresaw, that a wealthy body of subjects in England, and a very numerous one in Ireland, would, instead of continuing adverse to a government which treated them with rigor, become attached to their king and country by the most powerful of all ties, gratitude for favors received, and desire of securing the continuance of favor by dutiful conduct. With such views of the salutary effects of the repeal, it was impossible not to wish that the benefit of it might be extended to the Roman catholics in Scotland. * * * *

"As soon, however, as I perceived the extent and violence of the flame which the discussion of this subject had kindled in Scotland, my ideas concerning the expedience at this juncture of the measure in question, began to alter. For, although I did think, and I do still believe, that if the protestants in this country had acquiesced in the repeal as quietly as our brethren in England and Ireland, a fatal blow would have been given to popery in the British dominions; I knew, that in legislation, the sentiments and dispositions of the people for whom laws are made should be attended to with care. I remembered that one of the wisest men of antiquity, declared, that he had framed for his fellow-citizens not the best laws, but the best laws which they could bear. I recollected with reverence, that the divine legislator himself, accommodating his dispensations to the frailty of his subjects, had given the Israelites for a season, *statutes which were not good.* Even the prejudices of the people are, in my opinion, respectable; and an indulgent legislature ought not unnecessarily to run counter to them. It appeared manifestly to be sound policy, in the present temper of the people, to soothe rather than to irritate them: and however ill-founded their apprehensions might be, some concession was now requisite in order to remove them. In every argument against the repeal of the penal laws, what seemed chiefly to alarm my brethren who were adverse to it, was the liberty which, as they supposed, was given by the act of last session to popish ecclesiastics to open schools, and take upon them the public instruction of youth. In order to quiet their fears with respect to

this, I applied to his majesty's advocate and solicitor-general, and by their permission, I proposed to a respectable minister and elder of this church, who deservedly possess much credit with the opposers of this repeal, that such provisos should be inserted in the bill which was to be moved in parliament, for restraining the popish clergy in this point, as would obviate every danger apprehended. These gentlemen fairly told me, that, if such a proposition had been made more early, they did not doubt that it might have produced good effects; but, now matters were gone so far, that they were persuaded nothing less would satisfy the people than a resolution to drop the bill altogether. Persuaded of the truth of what they represented, seeing the alarm spread rapidly in every quarter, and knowing well how imperfectly transactions in this country are understood in the other part of the island, I considered it as my duty to lay before his majesty's servants in London a fair state of the sentiments of the people in Scotland. My station in the church, I thought, entitled me to take this liberty in a matter purely ecclesiastical. I flattered myself, that my avowed approbation and strenuous support of a measure which had been unhappily so much misunderstood, might give some weight to my representations. I informed them, that the design of extending the repeal of the penal statutes of king William to Scotland, had excited a very general alarm: that the spirit of opposition to this measure spread among the king's most loyal and attached subjects in this country: that nothing would calm and appease them, but the relinquishing all thoughts of such a bill: that the procuring of the intended relaxation for a handful of catholics, was not an advantage to be put in competition with the imprudence of irritating so great a body of well-affected subjects: that if the measure were persisted in, fatal effects would follow; and no man, how great soever his sagacity might be, could venture to foretel what would be the extent of the danger, and what the violent operations of an incensed populace: that, groundless as the fears of the people might be, it was prudent to quiet them: and that the same wisdom and moderation which

had induced government, some years ago, to repeal the act for naturalizing the Jews, in consequence of an alarm, as ill-grounded in the southern parts of the island, ought now to make a similar concession, from indulgence to the prejudice of the people on this side of the Tweed.

"Such has been the tenor of my conduct. While I thought a repeal of the penal statutes would produce good effects, I supported it openly; when I foresaw bad consequences from persisting in a measure which I had warmly approved, I preferred the public good to my own private sentiments; I honestly remonstrated against it; and I have the satisfaction to think that I am the only private person (as far as I know) in Scotland, who applied to those in power, in order to prevent that much dreaded repeal, which has been represented as the subversion of every sacred right for which our ancestors contended and suffered."

The last assembly in which Dr. Robertson sat was that of 1780. While his faculties were yet vigorous, his constitution unbroken, and his influence undiminished, he chose to withdraw from the active scenes in which he had so long borne a part, and to consecrate the remainder of his life to the quiet pursuits of study, and to the pastoral duties of his profession. His retreat was deeply regretted and sincerely felt by his friends; nor was it less lamented by many individuals of the opposite party of the church, who, while they resisted his principles of ecclesiastical policy, loved his candor, and respected his integrity.*

---

* A few particulars, "in addition to Dr. Erskine's funeral sermon on the death of Dr. Robertson," have been kindly communicated to me, by my friend, the Rev. Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, Bart. The testimony which they contain to Dr. Robertson's merits as an ecclesiastical leader, will have no small weight with those who are acquainted with the worth and the talents of the writer.

"In mentioning the character of Dr. Robertson as a leader of the prevailing party in the church, there is a circumstance which ought not to be omitted, by which he distinguished himself from all his predecessors who had held the same situation. Before his time, those of the clergy who pretended to guide the deliberations of the general assembly, derived the chief part of their influence from their connexion with the men who had the management of Scots affairs. They allowed themselves to receive instructions from them, and even from those who acted under them. They looked up to them as their patrons, and ranged themselves with their dependants. Their influence, of consequence, subsisted no longer than the powers from which it was derived. A change in the management of Scots affairs either left the prevailing party in the church without their leaders, or obliged their leaders to submit to the

Among these, there is one whose liberal and affectionate zeal in embalming the memory of a political antagonist, recalls to our recollection, amidst the unre-

---

meanness of receiving instructions from other patrons. Dr. Robertson, from the beginning, disengaged himself completely from a dependence which was never respectable, and to which he felt himself superior. He had the countenance of men in power; but he received it as a man who judged for himself, and whose influence was his own. The political changes of his time did not affect his situation. The different men who had the management of Scots affairs uniformly co-operated with him—but though they assisted him, they looked up to *his personal influence* in the church, which no man in the country believed to be derived from *them*.

"Those who differed most in opinion with Dr. Robertson, but who are sincerely attached to the interests and to the integrity of the church, must allow this conduct to have been both respectable and meritorious. It will always reflect honor on his memory, and has left an important lesson to his successors.

"It is not useless to mention his fairness in the debates of the assembly. Whether his opponents were convinced by his arguments or not, they were commonly sensible of the candor with which he stated them, and of the personal respect with which they were treated by him. And though the concessions which he was always ready to make to them when they did not affect the substance of his own argument, might be imputed to political sagacity as well as to candor, there was uniformly an appearance of candor in his manner, by which he preserved their good opinion, and which greatly contributed to extend his influence among his own friends. Like all popular meetings, the general assembly sometimes contains individuals, who have more acuteness than delicacy, and who allow themselves to eke out their arguments by rude and personal invectives. Dr. Robertson had a superior address in replying to men of this cast, without adopting their asperity, and often made them feel the absurdity of the personal attack, by the attention which he seemed to bestow on their argument.

"It should be mentioned also, that Dr. Robertson's early example, and his influence in more advanced life, chiefly contributed to render the debates in the assembly interesting and respectable, by bringing forward all the men of abilities to their natural share of the public business. Before his time, this had been almost entirely in the hands of the older members of the church, who were the only persons that were thought entitled to deliver their opinions, and whose influence was often derived more from their age than from their judgment or their talents.

"I do not know whether the reasons, which led Dr. Robertson to retire from the assembly after 1780, have ever been thoroughly understood. They were not suggested by his age, for he was then only fifty-nine; nor by any diminution of his influence; for, in the apprehension of the public, it was at that time as great as it had ever been. It is very probable that he anticipated a time when a new leader might come forward; and thought it better to retire while his influence was undiminished, than to run the risque, in the end of his life, of a struggle with younger men, who might be as successful as he had been. But I recollect distinctly, what he once said to myself on the subject, which I am persuaded he repeated to many others. He had been often reproached by the more violent men of his party for not adopting stronger measures, than he thought either right or wise. He had yielded to them many points against his own judgment; but they were not satisfied: he was plagued with letters of reproach and remonstrance on a variety of subjects, and he complained of the petulance and acrimony with which they were written. But there was one subject which for some years before he retired had become particularly uneasy to him, and on which he said he had been more urged and fretted than on all the other subjects of contention in the church; the scheme into which many of his friends entered zealously for abolishing subscription to the confession of faith and formula. This he expressly declared his resolution to resist in every form. But he was so much teazed with remonstrances on the subject, that he mentioned them as having at least *confirmed* his resolution to retire. He claimed to himself the merit of having prevented this controversy from being agitated in the assemblies; but warned me as a young man that it would become the chief controversy of my time, and stated to me the reasons which had determined his opinion on the subject. The conversation was probably about 1782, or 1783. I have a distinct recollection of it; though I have no idea that his prediction will be verified, as the controversy seems to be more asleep now than it was a few years ago."

lenting rancor which disgraces the factions of modern times, the memorable tribute which *Metellus* paid to the virtues of *Scipio* on the day of his funeral: *Ite, filii, celebrate exequias; nunquam civis majoris funus videbitis.** I need scarcely, after what I have hinted, mention to the society the name of Dr. Erskine; of whose sermon on the death of his colleague, it is difficult to say, whether it reflects greater honor on the character of the writer, or of him whom it commemorates. The author will, I hope, pardon me for transcribing one passage, which is intimately connected with this part of my subject, and which combines, with a testimony of inestimable value to Dr. Robertson's fame, some important information which I could not supply from any source of equal authority.

"His speeches in church courts were admired by those whom they did not convince, and acquired and preserved him an influence over a majority in them, which none before him enjoyed: though his measures were sometimes new, and warmly, and with great strength of argument opposed, both from the press, and in the general assembly. To this influence many causes contributed: his firm adherence to the general principles of church policy, which he early adopted; his sagacity in forming plans; his steadiness in executing them; his quick discernment of whatever might hinder or promote his designs; his boldness in encountering difficulties; his presence of mind in improving every occasional advantage; the address with which, when he saw it necessary, he could make an honorable retreat; and his skill in stating a vote, and seizing the favorable moment for ending a debate, and urging a decision. He guided and governed others, without seeming to assume any superiority over them: and fixed and strengthened his power, by often, in matters of form and expediency, preferring the opinions of those with whom he acted, to his own. In former times, hardly any rose up to speak in the general assembly, till called upon by the *moderator*, unless men advanced in

* Plin. Hist. Nat. vii. 44.

years, of high rank, or of established characters. His example and influence encouraged young men of abilities to take their share of public business: and thus deprived *moderators* of an engine for preventing causes being fairly and impartially discussed. The power of others, who formerly had in some measure guided ecclesiastical affairs, was derived from ministers of state, and expired with their fall. His remained unhurt amidst frequent changes of administration. Great men in office were always ready to countenance him, to cooperate with him, and to avail themselves of his aid. But he judged for himself, and scorned to be their slave; or to submit to receive their instructions. Hence, his influence, not confined to men of mercenary views, extended to many of a free and independent spirit, who supported, because they approved his measures; which others, from the same independent spirit, thought it their duty steadily to oppose.

"Deliberate in forming his judgment, but, when formed, not easily moved to renounce it, he sometimes viewed the altered plans of others with too suspicious an eye. Hence, there were able and worthy men, of whom he expressed himself less favorably, and whose latter appearances in church judicatories, he censured as inconsistent with principles which they had formerly professed; while they maintained, that the system of managing church affairs was changed, not their opinions or conduct. Still, however, keen and determined opposition to his schemes of ecclesiastical policy, neither extinguished his esteem, nor forfeited his friendly offices, when he saw opposition carried on without rancor, and when he believed that it originated from conscience and principle, not from personal animosity, or envy, or ambition." *

I shall not presume to add any thing in illustration of these remarks. The greater part of them relate to transactions of which I had no immediate knowledge, and of which I am not a competent judge; and, at any rate, no testimony of mine could increase the value of

* Discourses, &c. by John Erskine, D. D. p. 271.

praise from so able and so impartial a hand. Of one quality, however, ascribed to Dr. Robertson by his colleague, his ability in debate, I may be allowed to express my own opinion; as I was often led by curiosity, in my early years, to witness the proceedings of the court where it was principally displayed; and which, since the union of the kingdoms, is all that exists in Scotland, to preserve the semblance of popular deliberation. This part of his fame will soon rest on tradition only; but by many who are still able to judge from their own recollection, I shall not be accused of exaggeration, when I say, that in *some* of the most essential qualifications of a speaker, he was entitled to rank with the first names which have, in our times, adorned the British senate. Nor was the opposition with which he had to contend unworthy of his exertions; formidable as it long was in zeal and numbers, and aided by a combination of talents which will not easily be equalled; the copious and fervid declamation of *Crosbie;* the classical, argumentative, and commanding eloquence of *Dick;* and the powerful, though coarse invective of *Freebairn,* whose name would, in a different age, have been transmitted to posterity with those of the rustic and intrepid apostles who freed their country from the hierarchy of Rome.*

The characteristic of Dr. Robertson's eloquence was *persuasion;* mild, rational, and conciliating, yet manly and dignified. In early life, when forced as a partisan to expose himself to the contentious heat of popular discussion, he is said to have been distinguished by promptitude and animation in repelling the attacks which he occasionally encountered; but long before the period during which I knew him, he had become the acknowledged head of his party, and generally spoke last in the debate; resuming the arguments on both sides, with such perspicuity of arrangement and expression; such respect to his antagonists; and such an air of candor and earnestness in every thing he said,

*Andrew Crosbie, Esq. vice-dean of the faculty of Advocates; Robert Dick. D.D. one of the ministers of Edinburgh; the Rev. Mr. Freebairn, minister of Dumbarton. All of them died many years before Dr. Robertson.

that he often united the suffrages of the house in favor of the conclusions he wished to establish.

His pronunciation and accent were strongly marked with the peculiarities of his country; nor was this defect compensated by the graces of his delivery. His manner, however, though deficient in ease, was interesting and impressive; and had something in its general effect, neither unsuitable to his professional station, nor to the particular style of his eloquence. His diction was rich and splendid, and abounded with the same beauties that characterize his writings.

In these details with respect to his ecclesiastical politics, I may perhaps be thought by some to have been more circumstantial than was necessary; but, as he himself always dwelt on that subject with peculiar satisfaction, I could not pass it over more slightly than I have done. Nor is it so foreign, as it may at first appear, to his character as an historian; for, narrow and obscure as his field of action was, it afforded him a closer view than most authors have enjoyed, of the intrigues of contending factions; and an opportunity of studying, though on a scale comparatively small, the passions that decide the fate of nations. In tracing, accordingly, the springs of human conduct, his sagacity is strongly impressed with that knowledge of the world, which experience alone can communicate; and, even in those characteristical portraits, on which he has lavished all the decorations of his style, he is seldom or ever misled, either by the affectation of eloquence, or of metaphysical refinement, from a faithful adherence to truth and nature.

I would willingly enlarge on his merits in a different department of his professional employments, of which I am more competent to judge from personal knowledge, were I not afraid, that my own academical habits might lead me to attach an interest to what would appear of little moment to others. I shall therefore only remark in general, his assiduous attention, amidst his various occupations, both speculative and active, to the minutest duties of his office as head of the university; duties which nothing but his habits of arrangement and the

severest economy of his time could have enabled him to discharge with so little appearance of hurry or inconvenience. The valuable accession of books which the public library received while under his administration, was chiefly owing to his prudent and exact application of the very slender funds appropriated to that establishment; the various societies, both literary and medical, which, in this place, have long contributed so essentially to the improvement of the rising generation, were, most of them, either planned or reformed under his direction and patronage; and if, as a seat of learning, Edinburgh has, of late, more than formerly, attracted the notice of the world, much must be ascribed to the influence of his example, and to the lustre of his name. The good sense, temper, and address, with which he presided for thirty years in our university meetings, were attended with effects no less essential to our prosperity: and are attested by a fact which is perhaps without a parallel in the annals of any other literary community; that during the whole of that period there did not occur a single question which was not terminated by an unanimous decision.

In consequence of the various connexions with society, which arose from these professional duties, and from the interest which he was led to take, both by his official situation, and the activity of his public spirit, in the literary or the patriotic undertakings of others,* a considerable portion of Dr. Robertson's leisure was devoted to conversation and company. No man enjoyed these with more relish; and few have possessed the same talents to add to their attractions.

A rich stock of miscellaneous information, acquired from books and from an extensive intercourse with the world, together with a perfect acquaintance at all times with the topics of the day, and the soundest sagacity and good sense applied to the occurrences of common life, rendered him the most agreeable and instructive of companions. He seldom aimed at wit; but, with his intimate friends, he often indulged a sportive and fanci-

* See Appendix.

ful species of humor. He delighted in good-natured, characteristical anecdotes of his acquaintance, and added powerfully to their effect by his own enjoyment in relating them. He was, in a remarkable degree, susceptible of the ludicrous; but, on no occasion did he forget the dignity of his character, or the decorum of his profession; nor did he even lose sight of that classical taste which adorned his compositions. His turn of expression was correct and pure; sometimes, perhaps, inclining more than is expected in the carelessness of a social hour, to formal and artificial periods; but it was stamped with his own manner no less than his premeditated style: it was always the language of a superior and a cultivated mind, and it embellished every subject on which he spoke. In the company of strangers, he increased his exertions to amuse and to inform; and the splendid variety of his conversation was commonly the chief circumstance on which they dwelt in enumerating his talents; and yet, I must acknowledge, for my own part, that, much as I always admired his powers when they were thus called forth, I enjoyed his society less, than when I saw him in the circle of his intimates, or in the bosom of his family.

It only now remains for me to mention his exemplary diligence in the discharge of his pastoral duties; a diligence which, instead of relaxing as he advanced in life, became more conspicuous, when his growing infirmities withdrew him from business, and lessened the number of his active engagements. As long as his health allowed him, he preached regularly every Sunday; and he continued to do so occasionally, till within a few months of his death.

The particular style of his pulpit eloquence may be judged of from the specimen which has been long in the hands of the public; and it is not improbable, that the world might have been favored with others of equal excellence, if he had not lost, before his removal from Gladsmuir, a volume of sermons which he had composed with care. The facility with which he could arrange his ideas, added to the correctness and fluency of his extemporary language, encouraged him to lay aside the

practice of writing, excepting on extraordinary occasions; and to content himself, in general, with such short notes as might recall to his memory the principal topics on which he meant to enlarge. To the value, however, and utility of these unpremeditated sermons we have the honorable testimony of his learned and excellent colleague, who heard him preach every week for more than twenty years. "His discourses from this place," says Dr. Erskine, "were so plain, that the most illiterate might easily understand them, and yet so correct and elegant that they could not incur their censure, whose taste was more refined. For several years before his death, he seldom wrote his sermons fully, or exactly committed his older sermons to memory; though had I not learned this from himself, I should not have suspected it; such was the variety and fitness of illustrations, the accuracy of his method, and the propriety of his style."

His health began apparently to decline in the end of the year 1791. Till then, it had been more uniformly good than might have been expected from his habits; but, about this period, he suddenly discovered strong symptoms of jaundice, which gradually undermined his constitution, and terminated at length in a lingering and fatal illness. He had the prospect of death long before him; a prospect deeply afflicting to his family and his friends; but of which, without any visible abatement in his spirits, he happily availed himself, to adorn the doctrines which he had long taught, by an example of fortitude and of christian resignation. In the concluding stage of his disorder, he removed from Edinburgh to *Grange-house* in the neighbourhood, where he had the advantage of a freer air, and a more quiet situation, and (what he valued more than most men) the pleasure of rural objects, and of a beautiful landscape. While he was able to walk abroad, he commonly passed a part of the day in a small garden, enjoying the simple gratifications it afforded with all his wonted relish. Some who now hear me will long remember—among the trivial yet interesting incidents which marked these last weeks of his memorable life—his daily visits to the fruit trees,

(which were then in blossom) and the smile with which he, more than once, contrasted the interest he took in their progress, with the event which was to happen before their maturity. At his particular desire, I saw him (for the last time) on the 4th of June, 1793, when his weakness confined him to his couch, and his articulation was already beginning to fail: and it is in obedience to a request with which he then honored me, that I have ventured, without consulting my own powers, to offer this tribute to his memory. He died on the 11th of the same month, in the 71st year of his age.

I have already hinted at his domestic happiness. Nothing was wanting to render it perfect while he lived; and, at his death, he had the satisfaction to leave, in prosperous circumstances, a numerous family united to each other and to their excellent mother, by the tenderest affection. His eldest son, an eminent lawyer at the Scotch bar, has been only prevented by the engagements of an active profession, from sustaining his father's literary name; while his two younger sons, both of whom very early embraced a military life, have carried his vigor and enterprise into a different career of ambition.* His eldest daughter is married to Mr. Brydone, the well-known author of one of our most elegant and popular books of travels. Another is the widow of the late John Russell, Esq. clerk to the signet, and one of the members of this society.

The general view which has already been given of Dr. Robertson's occupations and habits, supersedes the necessity of attempting a formal delineation of his character. To the particulars, however, which have been

* Dr. Robertson's second son is now lieutenant colonel of the 92d regiment. His name is repeatedly mentioned with distinction in the history of Lord Cornwallis's military operations in India; particularly in the general orders after the siege of Nundydroog, where he commanded in the European flank company that led the assault. The following paragraph from Colonel Dirom's narrative contains a testimony to his conduct on this occasion, which would have been grateful to the feelings of his father had he survived to peruse it: "The carnage which must have ensued in clearing the fort of the enemy, was prevented partly by a number of the garrison escaping by ropes and ladders over a low part of the wall; but chiefly by the exertions of Capt. Robertson, who seeing the place was carried, turned all his attention to preserving order; and preventing the unnecessary effusion of blood. To his humanity the bukshey and killedar owed their lives; and of the garrison there were only about forty men killed and wounded."

incidentally mentioned in the course of this biographical sketch, it may not be unimportant to add, that the same sagacity and good sense which so eminently distinguished him as a writer, guided his conduct in life, and rendered his counsels of inestimable value to his friends. He was not forward in offering advice; but when consulted, as he was very frequently by his younger acquaintance, he entered into their concerns with the most lively interest, and seemed to have a pleasure and a pride in imparting to them all the lights of his experience and wisdom. Good sense was indeed the most prominent feature in his intellectual character; and it is unquestionably of all the qualities of the understanding, that which essentially constitutes superiority of mind; for although we are sometimes apt to appropriate the appellation of genius to certain peculiarities in the intellectual habits, it is he only who distinguishes himself from the rest of mankind, by thinking better than they on the same subjects, who fairly brings his powers into comparison with others. This was in a remarkable degree the case with Dr. Robertson. He was not eminent for metaphysical acuteness; nor did he easily enter into speculations involving mathematical or mechanical ideas; but, in those endowments which lay the foundation of successful conduct, and which fit a man to acquire an influence over others, he had no superior. Among those who have, like him, devoted the greater part of life to study, perhaps it would be difficult to find his equal.

His practical acquaintance with human nature was great, and he possessed the soundest and most accurate notions of the characters of those with whom he was accustomed to associate. In that quick penetration, indeed, which reads the soul, and estimates the talents of others by a sort of intuition, he was surpassed by many; and I have often known him misled by first impressions; but where he had an opportunity of continuing his observations for a length of time, he seldom failed in forming conclusions equally just, refined, and profound. In a general knowledge of the world, and of the ways of men, his superiority was striking and indisputable; still more so, in my opinion, than in the judgments he

formed of individuals. Nor is this surprising, when we consider the joint influence of his habits as an historian, and as a political leader.

Too much cannot be said of his moral qualities. Exemplary and amiable in the offices of private life, he exhibited in his public conduct, a rare union of political firmness with candor and moderation. "He enjoyed," says Dr. Erskine, "the bounties of Providence without running into riot; was temperate without austerity; condescending and affable without meanness; and in expense neither sordid nor prodigal. He could feel an injury, and yet bridle his passion; was grave, not sullen; steady, not obstinate; friendly, not officious; prudent and cautious, not timid." The praise is liberal, and it is expressed with the cordial warmth of friendship; but it comes from one who had the best opportunity of knowing the truth, as he had enjoyed Dr. Robertson's intimacy from his childhood, and was afterwards, for more than twenty years, his colleague in the same church; while his zealous attachment to a different system of ecclesiastical government, though it never impaired his affection for the companion of his youth, exempts him from any suspicion of undue partiality.

In point of stature Dr. Robertson was rather above the middle size; and his form though it did not convey the idea of much activity, announced vigor of body and a healthful constitution. His features were regular and manly; and his eye spoke at once good sense and good humor. He appeared to greatest advantage in his complete clerical dress; and was more remarkable for gravity and dignity in discharging the functions of his public stations, than for ease or grace in private society. His portrait, by Reynolds, painted about twenty years ago, is an admirable likeness; and fortunately, (for the colors are already much faded) all its spirit is preserved in an excellent mezzotinto. At the request of his colleagues in the university,* who were anxious to have

* This request was conveyed to Dr. Robertson by Mr. Dalzel and was received by him with much sensibility, as a mark of the esteem and approbation of a society over which he had presided for thirty years.

I neglected to mention in a former note the Latin discourses which Dr. Robertson

some memorial of him placed in the public library, he sat again, a few months before his death, to Mr. Raeburn; at a time when his altered and sickly aspect rendered the task of the artist peculiarly difficult. The picture, however, is not only worthy, in every respect, of Mr. Raeburn's high and deserved reputation, but to those who were accustomed to see Dr. Robertson at this interesting period, derives an additional value from an air of languor and feebleness, which strongly marked his appearance during his long decline.

I should feel myself happy, if, in concluding this memoir, I could indulge the hope, that it may be the means of completing and finishing that picture which his writings exhibit of his mind. In attempting to delineate its characteristic features, I have certainly possessed one advantage; that I had long an opportunity of knowing and studying the original; and that my portrait, such as it is, is correctly copied from my own impressions. I am sensible, at the same time, that much more might have been accomplished by a writer whose pursuits were more congenial than mine to Dr. Robertson's: nor would any thing have induced me to depart, so far as I have now done, from the ordinary course of my own

---

pronounced annually before the university, in compliance with the established practice among his predecessors in office. The first of these was read on the 3d of February, 1763. Its object was to recommend the study of classical learning; and it contained, among a variety of other splendid passages, a beautiful panegyric on the Stoical philosophy. His second discourse (9th of February, 1764) consisted chiefly of moral and literary observations, adapted to the particular circumstances of youth. My friend, Mr. Dalzel, who has lately perused these Latin Manuscripts with care, observes of this oration "that the style is uncommonly elegant and impressive, and possesses all the distinguishing characteristics of Dr. Robertson's English compositions." A third discourse was pronounced on February 14th, 1765; and a fourth on February 20th, 1766. The subject of both is the same; the question concerning the comparative advantages of public and private education. The execution is such as might be expected from the abilities of the author, exerted on a topic on which he was so eminently fitted to decide, not only by his professional situation and habits, but by an extensive and discriminating knowledge of the world.

These annual discourses (which never failed to produce a strong and happy impression on the minds of his young hearers) he was compelled, after this period, to discontinue by his avocations as an author, and by other engagements which he conceived to be of still greater importance. It is indeed astonishing that he was able to devote so much time as he did to his academical duties; particularly when we consider that all his works were at first committed to writing in his own hand, and that he seldom, if ever, attempted to dictate to an *amanuensis*. It may be gratifying to those to whom the literary habits of authors are an object of curiosity to add, that his practice in composition was (according to his own statement in a letter to Mr. Strahan) "to finish as near perfection as he was able, so that his subsequent alterations were inconsiderable."

studies, but my respect for the last wish of a much lamented friend, expressed at a moment when nothing remained for me but silent acquiescence.

It might be considered by some as a blameable omission, if I were to overlook, in this memoir, the marks of regard which Dr. Robertson received from different literary academies on the continent. I have already taken notice of the honor conferred on him by the Royal Academy of history at Madrid; but I forgot to mention, in the proper place, that in 1781, he was elected one of the foreign members of the Academy of Sciences at Padua; and in 1783, one of the foreign members of the Imperial Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg.

From the last of these cities, he was honored with another very flattering distinction; the intelligence of which was conveyed to him by his friend Dr. Rogerson, in a letter, from which the following passage is transcribed:

"Your History of America was received and perused by her Imperial Majesty with singular marks of approbation. All your historical productions have been ever favorite parts of her reading. Not long ago, doing me the honor to converse with me upon historical composition, she mentioned you with particular distinction, and with much admiration of that sagacity and discernment displayed by you in painting the human mind and character, as diversified by the various causes that operated upon it, in those eras and states of society which your subject led you to treat. She assigned you the place of first model in that species of composition. As to the History of Charles V., she was pleased to add, 'C'est le compagnon constant de tous mes voyages; je ne me lasse jamais à le lire, et particulièrement le premier volume.'

"She then presented a very handsome gold enamelled snuff-box, richly set with diamonds, ordering me to transmit it to you, and to desire your acceptance of it as a mark of her esteem; observing at the same time, most graciously, that a person whose labors had afforded her so much satisfaction, merited some attention from her."

The active part which Dr. Robertson took in the foundation of the society before which the foregoing memoir was read, is so well known to all the members, that it did not appear necessary to recall it to their recollection. For the information of others, however, it may be proper to mention, that the first idea of this establishment, and of the plan adopted in its formation, was suggested by him; and that, without his zealous cooperation, there is little probability that the design would ever have been carried into execution.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

THOMAS REID, D. D. F. R. S.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

THOMAS REID, D. D. F. R. S.

SECTION I.

From Dr. Reid's Birth till the Date of his latest Publication.

THE life of which I am now to present to the Royal Society a short account, although it fixes an era in the history of modern philosophy, was uncommonly barren of those incidents which furnish materials for biography; strenuously devoted to truth, to virtue, and to the best interests of mankind; but spent in the obscurity of a learned retirement, remote from the pursuits of ambition, and with little solicitude about literary fame. After the agitation, however, of the political convulsions which Europe has witnessed for a course of years, the simple record of such a life may derive an interest even from its uniformity; and, when contrasted with the events of the passing scene, may lead the thoughts to some views of human nature, on which it is not ungrateful to repose.

Thomas Reid, D.D. late professor of Moral Philosophy in the university of Glasgow, was born on the 26th of April, 1710, at Strachan in Kincardineshire, a country parish situated about twenty miles from Aberdeen, on the north side of the Grampian mountains.

His father, the Reverend Lewis Reid, was minister of this parish for fifty years. He was a clergyman, according to his son's account of him, respected by all who knew him, for his piety, prudence, and benevolence; inheriting from his ancestors, most of whom, from the time of the protestant establishment, had been ministers of the church of Scotland, that purity and simplicity of manners which became his station; and a love of letters, which, without attracting the notice of the world, amused his leisure, and dignified his retirement.

For some generations before his time, a propensity to literature, and to the learned professions; a propensity which, when it has once become characteristical of a race, is peculiarly apt to be propagated by the influence of early associations and habits, may be traced in several individuals among his kindred. One of his ancestors, James Reid, was the first minister of Banchory-Ternan after the Reformation; and transmitted to four sons a predilection for those studious habits which formed his own happiness. He was himself a younger son of Mr. Reid of Pitfoddels, a gentleman of a very ancient and respectable family in the county of Aberdeen.

James Reid was succeeded as minister of Banchory by his son Robert. Another son, Thomas, rose to considerable distinction both as a philosopher and a poet; and seems to have wanted neither ability nor inclination to turn his attainments to the best advantage. After travelling over Europe, and maintaining, as was the custom of his age, public disputations in several universities, he collected into a volume, the theses and dissertations which had been the subjects of his literary contests; and also published some Latin poems, which may be found in the collection entitled, 'Deliciæ Poëtarum Scotorum.' On his return to his native country, he fixed his residence in London, where he was appointed secretary in the Greek and Latin tongues to king James I. of England, and lived in habits of intimacy with some of the most distinguished characters of that period. Little more, I believe, is known of Thomas Reid's history, excepting that he bequeathed to the Marischal college of Aberdeen, a curious collection of

books and manuscripts, with a fund for establishing a salary to a librarian.

Alexander Reid, the third son, was physician to King Charles I., and published several books on surgery and medicine. The fortune he acquired in the course of his practice was considerable, and enabled him, besides many legacies to his relations and friends, to leave various lasting and honorable memorials, both of his benevolence, and of his attachment to letters.

A fourth son, whose name was Adam, translated into English, Buchanan's History of Scotland. Of this translation, which was never published, there is a manuscript copy in the possession of the university of Glasgow.

A grandson of Robert, the eldest of these sons, was the third minister of Banchory after the Reformation, and was great-grandfather of Thomas Reid, the subject of this memoir.*

The particulars hitherto mentioned, are stated on the authority of some short memorandums written by Dr. Reid a few weeks before his death. In consequence of a suggestion of his friend Dr. Gregory, he had resolved to amuse himself with collecting such facts as his papers or memory could supply, with respect to his life, and the progress of his studies; but, unfortunately, before he had fairly entered on the task, his design was interrupted by his last illness. If he had lived to complete it, I might have entertained hopes of presenting to the public some details with respect to the history of his opinions and speculations on those important subjects to which he dedicated his talents; the most interesting of all articles in the biography of a philosopher, and of which it is to be lamented, that so few authentic records are to be found in the annals of letters. All the information, however, which I have derived from these notes, is exhausted in the foregoing pages; and I must content myself, in the continuation of my narrative, with those indirect aids which tradition, and the recollection of a few old acquaintance, afford; added to what I

* Note (A.)

myself have learned from Dr. Reid's conversation, or collected from a careful perusal of his writings.

His mother, Margaret Gregory, was a daughter of David Gregory, Esq. of Kinnairdie, in Banffshire; elder brother of James Gregory, the inventor of the reflecting telescope, and the antagonist of Huyghens. She was one of twenty-nine children; the most remarkable of whom was David Gregory, Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford, and an intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton. Two of her younger brothers were at the same time professors of mathematics; the one at St. Andrew's, the other at Edinburgh; and were the first persons who taught the Newtonian philosophy in our northern universities. The hereditary worth and genius which have so long distinguished, and which still distinguish, the descendants of this memorable family, are well known to all who have turned their attention to Scottish biography; but it is not known so generally, that in the female line, the same characteristical endowments have been conspicuous in various instances; and that to the other monuments which illustrate the race of the Gregories, is to be added the Philosophy of Reid.

With respect to the earlier part of Dr. Reid's life, all that I have been able to learn, amounts to this; that after two years spent at the parish school of Kincardine, he was sent to Aberdeen, where he had the advantage of prosecuting his classical studies under an able and diligent teacher; that about the age of twelve or thirteen, he was entered as a student in Marischal college; and that his master in philosophy, for three years, was Dr. George Turnbull, who afterward attracted some degree of notice as an author; particularly, by a book, entitled, "Principles of Moral Philosophy," and by a voluminous treatise, long ago forgotten, on Ancient Painting.* The sessions of the college were, at that time, very short, and the education, according to Dr. Reid's own account, slight and superficial.

It does not appear from the information which I have received, that he gave any early indications of future

* Note (B.)

eminence. His industry, however, and modesty, were conspicuous from his childhood; and it was foretold of him, by the parish schoolmaster, who initiated him in the first principles of learning, "that he would turn out to be a man of good and well-wearing parts;" a prediction which, although it implied no flattering hopes of those more brilliant endowments which are commonly regarded as the constituents of genius, touched, not unhappily, on that capacity of "patient thought," which contributed so powerfully to the success of his philosophical researches.*

His residence at the university was prolonged beyond the usual term, in consequence of his appointment to the office of librarian, which had been endowed by one of his ancestors about a century before. The situation was acceptable to him, as it afforded an opportunity of indulging his passion for study, and united the charms of a learned society, with the quiet of an academical retreat.

During this period he formed an intimacy with John Stewart, afterward professor of mathematics in Marischal college, and author of a Commentary on Newton's Quadrature of Curves. His predilection for mathematical pursuits, was confirmed and strengthened by this connexion. I have often heard him mention it with much pleasure, while he recollected the ardor with which they both prosecuted these fascinating studies, and the lights which they imparted mutually to each other in their first perusal of the Principia, at a time when a knowledge of the Newtonian discoveries was to be acquired only in the writings of their illustrious author.

In 1736, Dr. Reid resigned his office of librarian, and accompanied Mr. Stewart on an excursion to England. They visited together London, Oxford, and Cambridge, and were introduced to the acquaintance of many persons of the first literary eminence. His relation to Dr. David Gregory procured him a ready access to Martin

---

* "If I have done the public any service, it is due to nothing but industry and patient thought." Sir Isaac Newton's First letter to Dr. Bentley.

Folkes, whose house concentrated the most interesting objects which the metropolis had to offer to his curiosity. At Cambridge he saw Dr. Bentley, who delighted him with his learning, and amused him with his vanity; and enjoyed repeatedly the conversation of the blind mathematician, Saunderson; a phenomenon in the history of the human mind, to which he has referred more than once, in his philosophical speculations.

With the learned and amiable man who was his companion on this journey, he maintained an uninterrupted friendship till 1766, when Mr. Stewart died of a malignant fever. His death was accompanied with circumstances deeply afflicting to Dr. Reid's sensibility; the same disorder proving fatal to his wife and daughter, both of whom were buried with him in one grave.

In 1737, Dr. Reid was presented, by the King's college of Aberdeen, to the living of New Machar in the same county; but the circumstances in which he entered on his preferment were far from auspicious. The intemperate zeal of one of his predecessors, and an aversion to the law of patronage, had so inflamed the minds of his parishioners against him, that, in the first discharge of his clerical functions, he had not only to encounter the most violent opposition, but was exposed to personal danger. His unwearied attention, however, to the duties of his office, the mildness and forbearance of his temper, and the active spirit of his humanity, soon overcame all these prejudices; and, not many years afterward, when he was called to a different situation, the same persons who had suffered themselves to be so far misled, as to take a share in the outrages against him, followed him on his departure with their blessings and tears.

Dr. Reid's popularity at New Machar, as I am informed by the respectable clergyman* who now holds that living, increased greatly after his marriage, in 1740, with Elizabeth, daughter of his uncle, Dr. George Reid, physician in London. The accommodating manners of this excellent woman, and her good offices among the sick and neccesitous, are still remembered with grati-

* The Rev. William Stronach.

tude, and so endeared the family to the neighbourhood, that its removal was regarded as a general misfortune. The simple and affecting language in which some old men expressed themselves on this subject, in conversing with the present minister, deserves to be recorded. "We fought *against* Dr. Reid, when he came, and would have fought *for* him when he went away."

In some notes relative to the earlier part of his history, which have been kindly communicated to me by the Rev. Mr. Davidson, minister of Rayne, it is mentioned as a proof of his uncommon modesty and diffidence, that long after he became minister of New Machar, he was accustomed, from a distrust in his own powers, to preach the sermons of Dr. Tillotson, and of Dr. Evans. I have heard also, through other channels, that, in his youth, he had cultivated the art of composition with less assiduity than might have been expected from his studious habits. The fact is curious, when contrasted with that ease, perspicuity, and purity of style, which he afterwards attained. From some information, however, which has been lately transmitted to me by one of his nearest relations, I have reason to believe, that the number of original discourses which he wrote while a country clergyman, was not inconsiderable.

The satisfaction of his own mind was probably, in this stage of his inquiries, a more powerful incentive to his philosophical speculations, than the hope of being able to instruct the world as an author. But whatever his views were, one thing is certain, that during his residence at New Machar, the greater part of his time was spent in the most intense study; more particularly in a careful examination of the laws of external perception, and of the other principles which form the groundwork of human knowledge. His chief relaxations were gardening and botany, to both of which pursuits he retained his attachment even in old age.

A paper which he published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, for the year 1748, affords some light with respect to the progress of his studies at the time when it was written. It is entitled, "An Essay on Quantity, occasioned by read-

ing a Treatise, in which Simple and Compound Ratios are applied to Virtue and Merit;" and shows plainly, by its contents, that, although he had not entirely relinquished the favorite researches of his youth, he was beginning to direct his thoughts to other objects.

The treatise alluded to in the title of this paper, was manifestly the "Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue," by Dr. Hutcheson of Glasgow. According to this very ingenious writer, the *moment* of public good produced by an individual, depending partly on his *benevolence*, and partly on his *ability*, the relation between these different moral ideas may be expressed in the technical form of algebraists, by saying, that the first is in the compound proportion of the two others. Hence Dr. Hutcheson infers, that "*the benevolence* of an agent, which in this system is synonymous with his *moral merit*, is proportional to a fraction, having the moment of good for the numerator, and the ability of the agent for the denominator." Various other examples of a similar nature occur in the same work; and are stated with a gravity not altogether worthy of the author. It is probable that they were intended merely as *illustrations* of his general reasonings, not as *media* of investigation for the discovery of new conclusions; but they appeared to Dr. Reid to be an innovation which it was of importance to resist, on account of the tendency it might have, by confounding the evidence of different branches of science, to retard the progress of knowledge. The very high reputation which Dr. Hutcheson then possessed in the universities of Scotland, added to the recent attempts of Pitcairn and Cheyne to apply mathematical reasoning to medicine, would bestow, it is likely, an interest on Dr. Reid's Essay at the time of its publication, which it can scarcely be expected to possess at present. Many of the observations, however, which it contains, are acute and original; and all of them are expressed with that clearness and precision, so conspicuous in his subsequent compositions. The circumstance which renders a subject susceptible of mathematical consideration, is accurately stated; and the proper province of that science defined in such a

manner, as sufficiently to expose the absurdity of those abuses of its technical phraseology which were at that time prevalent. From some passages in it, there is, I think, ground for concluding, that the author's metaphysical reading had not been very extensive previous to this period. The enumeration, in particular, which he has given of the different kinds of *proper quantity*, affords a proof, that he was not acquainted with the refined yet sound disquisitions concerning the nature of *number* and of *proportion*, which had appeared almost a century before, in the Mathematical Lectures of Dr. Barrow; nor with the remarks on the same subject introduced by Dr. Clarke in one of his controversial letters addressed to Leibnitz.

In the same paper, Dr. Reid takes occasion to offer some reflections on the disputes between the Newtonians and Leibnitzians concerning the measure of forces. The fundamental idea on which these reflections proceed, is just and important; and it leads to the correction of an error, committed very generally by the partisans of both opinions; that of mistaking a question concerning the comparative advantages of two *definitions*, for a difference of statement with respect to a *physical fact*. It must, I think, be acknowledged, at the same time, that the whole merits of the controversy are not here exhausted; and that the honor of placing this very subtle and abstruse question in a point of view calculated to reconcile completely the contending parties, was reserved for M. D'Alembert. To have fallen short of the success which attended the inquiries of that eminent man, on a subject so congenial to his favorite habits of study, will not reflect any discredit on the powers of Dr. Reid's mind in the judgment of those who are at all acquainted with the history of this celebrated discussion.

In 1752, the professors of King's college elected Dr. Reid professor of philosophy, in testimony of the high opinion they had formed of his learning and abilities. Of the particular plan which he followed in his academical lectures, while he held this office, I have not been able to obtain any satisfactory account; but the depart-

ment of science which was assigned to him by the general system of education in that university, was abundantly extensive; comprehending mathematics and physics as well as logic and ethics. A similar system was pursued formerly in the other universities of Scotland; the same professor then conducting his pupils through all those branches of knowledge which are now appropriated to different teachers. And where he happened fortunately to possess those various accomplishments which distinguished Dr. Reid in so remarkable a degree, it cannot be doubted that the unity and comprehensiveness of method, of which such academical courses admitted, must necessarily have possessed important advantages over that more minute subdivision of literary labor which has since been introduced. But as public establishments ought to adapt themselves to what is ordinary, rather than to what is possible, it is not surprising, that experience should have gradually suggested an arrangement more suitable to the narrow limits which commonly circumscribe human genius.

Soon after Dr. Reid's removal to Aberdeen, he projected, in conjunction with his friend Dr. John Gregory, a literary society, which subsisted for many years, and which seems to have had the happiest effects in awakening and directing that spirit of philosophical research, which has since reflected so much lustre on the north of Scotland. The meetings of this society were held weekly; and afforded the members, besides the advantages to be derived from a mutual communication of their sentiments on the common objects of their pursuit, an opportunity of subjecting their intended publications to the test of friendly criticism. The number of valuable works which issued nearly about the same time, from individuals connected with this institution, more particularly the writings of Reid, Gregory, Campbell, Beattie and Gerard, furnish the best panegyric on the enlightened views of those under whose direction it was originally formed.

Among these works, the most original and profound was unquestionably the Inquiry into the Human Mind, published by Dr. Reid in 1764. The plan appears to have been conceived, and the subject deeply meditated,

by the author long before; but it is doubtful, whether his modesty would have ever permitted him to present to the world the fruits of his solitary studies, without the encouragement which he received from the general acquiescence of his associates, in the most important conclusions to which he had been led.

From a passage in the dedication, it would seem, that the speculations which terminated in these conclusions had commenced as early as the year 1739; at which period the publication of Mr. Hume's Treatise of Human Nature induced him, for the first time, as he himself informs us, "to call in question the principles commonly received with regard to the human understanding." In his Essays on the Intellectual Powers, he acknowledges, that, in his youth, he had, without examination, admitted the established opinions on which Mr. Hume's system of scepticism was raised; and that it was the consequences which these opinions seemed to involve which roused his suspicions concerning their truth. "If I may presume," says he, "to speak my own sentiments, I once believed *the doctrine of Ideas* so firmly, as to embrace the whole of Berkeley's system along with it; till, finding other consequences to follow from it, which gave me more uneasiness than the want of a material world, it came into my mind more than forty years ago, to put the question, What evidence have I for this doctrine, that all the objects of my knowledge are ideas in my own mind? From that time to the present, I have been candidly and impartially, as I think, seeking for the evidence of this principle; but can find none, excepting the authority of philosophers."

In following the train of Dr. Reid's researches, this last extract merits attention, as it contains an explicit avowal, on his own part, that, at one period of his life, he had been led, by Berkeley's reasonings, to abandon the belief of the existence of *matter*. The avowal does honor to his candor, and the fact reflects no discredit on his sagacity. The truth is, that this article of the Berkeleian system, however contrary to the conclusions of a sounder philosophy, was the error of no common mind. Considered in contrast with that theory of materialism,

which the excellent author was anxious to supplant, it possessed important advantages, not only in its tendency, but in its scientific consistency; and it afforded a proof, wherever it met with a favorable reception, of an understanding superior to those casual associations, which, in the apprehensions of most men, blend indissolubly the phenomena of thought with the objects of external perception. It is recorded as a saying of M. Turgot, whose philosophical opinions in some important points approached very nearly to those of Dr. Reid,* that, "he who had never doubted of the existence of matter, might be assured he had no turn for metaphysical disquisitions."

As the refutation of Mr. Hume's sceptical theory was the great and professed object of Dr. Reid's Inquiry, he was anxious, before taking the field as a controversial writer, to guard against the danger of misapprehending or misrepresenting the meaning of his adversary, by submitting his reasonings to Mr. Hume's private examination. With this view, he availed himself of the good offices of Dr. Blair, with whom both he and Mr. Hume had long lived in habits of friendship. The communications which he at first transmitted, consisted only of detached parts of the work; and appear evidently, from a correspondence which I have perused, to have conveyed a very imperfect idea of his general system. In one of Mr. Hume's letters to Dr. Blair, he betrays some want of his usual good humor, in looking forward to his new antagonist. "I wish," says he, "that the parsons would confine themselves to their old occupation of worrying one another, and leave philosophers to argue with temper, moderation, and good manners." After Mr. Hume, however, had read the manuscript, he addressed himself directly to the author, in terms so candid and liberal, that it would be unjust to his memory to withhold from the public so pleasing a memorial of his character.

"By Dr. Blair's means, I have been favored with the perusal of your performance, which I have read with great pleasure and attention. It is certainly very rare, that a piece so deeply philosophical is written with so

* See, in particular, the article *Existence* in the Encyclopédie.

much spirit, and affords so much entertainment to the reader; though I must still regret the disadvantages under which I read it, as I never had the whole performance at once before me, and could not be able fully to compare one part with another. To this reason, chiefly, I ascribe some obscurities, which, in spite of your short analysis or abstract, still seem to hang over your system. For I must do you the justice to own, that when I enter into your ideas, no man appears to express himself with greater perspicuity than you do; a talent which, above all others, is requisite in that species of literature which you have cultivated. There are some objections which I would willingly propose to the chapter, *Of Sight*, did I not suspect that they proceed from my not sufficiently understanding it; and I am the more confirmed in this suspicion, as Dr. Blair tells me, that the former objections I made had been derived chiefly from that cause. I shall therefore forbear till the whole can be before me, and shall not at present propose any farther difficulties to your reasonings. I shall only say, that if you have been able to clear up these abstruse and important subjects, instead of being mortified, I shall be so vain as to pretend to a share of the praise; and shall think, that my errors, by having at least some coherence, had led you to make a more strict review of my principles, which were the common ones, and to perceive their futility.

"As I was desirous to be of some use to you, I kept a watchful eye all along over your style; but it is really so correct, and so good English, that I found not any thing worth the remarking. There is only one passage in this chapter, where you make use of the phrase *hinder to do*, instead of *hinder from doing*, which is the English one; but I could not find the passage when I sought for it. You may judge how unexceptionable the whole appeared to me, when I could remark so small a blemish. I beg my compliments to my friendly adversaries, Dr. Campbell and Dr. Gerard; and also to Dr. Gregory, whom I suspect to be of the same disposition, though he has not openly declared himself such." . . . .

Of the particular doctrines contained in Dr. Reid's

Inquiry, I do not think it necessary here to attempt any abstract; nor indeed do his speculations, conducted as they were in strict conformity to the rules of inductive philosophizing, afford a subject for the same species of rapid outline, which is so useful in facilitating the study of a merely hypothetical theory. Their great object was to record and to classify the phenomena which the operations of the human mind present to those who reflect carefully on the subjects of their consciousness; and of such a history, it is manifest, that no abridgment could be offered with advantage. Some reflections on the peculiar plan adopted by the author, and on the general scope of his researches in this department of science, will afterward find a more convenient place, when I shall have finished my account of his subsequent publications.

The idea of prosecuting the study of the human mind, on a plan analogous to that which had been so successfully adopted in physics by the followers of Lord Bacon, if not first conceived by Dr. Reid, was at least first carried successfully into execution in his writings. An attempt had long before been announced by Mr. Hume, in the title page of his Treatise of Human Nature, to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects; and some admirable remarks are made in the Introduction to that work, on the errors into which his predecessors had been betrayed by the spirit of hypothesis; and yet it is now very generally admitted, that the whole of his own system rests on a principle for which there is no evidence but the authority of philosophers; and it is certain, that in no part of it, has he aimed to investigate by a systematical analysis, those general principles of our constitution which can alone afford a synthetical explanation of its complicated phenomena.

I have often been disposed to think, that Mr. Hume's inattention to those rules of philosophizing which it was his professed intention to exemplify, was owing in part to some indistinctness in his notions concerning their import. It does not appear, that, in the earlier part of his studies, he had paid much attention to the models of

investigation exhibited in the writings of Newton and of his successors: and that he was by no means aware of the extraordinary merits of Bacon as a philosopher, nor of the influence which his writings have had on the subsequent progress of physical discovery, is demonstrated by the cold and qualified encomium which is bestowed on his genius, in one of the most elaborate passages of the History of England.

In these respects Dr. Reid possessed important advantages; familiarized, from his early years, to those experimental inquiries, which, in the course of the two last centuries, have exalted Natural Philosophy to the dignity of a science; and determined strongly, by the peculiar bent of his genius, to connect every step in the progress of discovery with the history of the human mind. The influence of the general views opened in the Novum Organon, may be traced in almost every page of his writings; and, indeed, the circumstance by which these are so strongly and characteristically distinguished, is, that they exhibit the first systematical attempt to exemplify, in the study of human nature, the same plan of investigation which conducted Newton to the properties of light, and to the law of gravitation. It is from a steady adherence to this plan, and not from the superiority of his inventive powers, that he claims to himself any merit as a philosopher; and he seems even willing, with a modesty approaching to a fault, to abandon the praise of what is commonly called *genius*, to the authors of the systems which he was anxious to refute. "It is genius," he observes in one passage, "and not the want of it, that adulterates philosophy, and fills it with error and false theory. A creative imagination disdains the mean offices of digging for a foundation, of removing rubbish, and carrying materials: leaving these servile employments to the drudges in science, it plans a design, and raises a fabric. Invention supplies materials where they are wanting, and fancy adds coloring, and every befitting ornament. The work pleases the eye, and wants nothing but solidity and a good foundation. It seems even to vie with the works of nature, till some succeeding architect blows it into ruins, and builds as goodly a fabric of his own in its place."

"Success in an inquiry of this kind," he observes farther, "it is not in human power to command; but perhaps it is possible, by caution and humility, to avoid error and delusion. The labyrinth may be too intricate, and the thread too fine, to be traced through all its windings; but, if we stop where we can trace it no farther, and secure the ground we have gained, there is no harm done; a quicker eye may in time trace it farther."

The unassuming language with which Dr. Reid endeavours to remove the prejudices naturally excited by a new attempt to philosophize on so unpromising, and hitherto so ungrateful a subject, recals to our recollection those passages in which Lord Bacon, filled as his own imagination was with the future grandeur of the fabric founded by his hand, bespeaks the indulgence of his readers, for an enterprise apparently so hopeless and presumptuous. The apology he offers for himself, when compared with the height to which the structure of physical knowledge has since attained, may perhaps have some effect in attracting a more general attention to pursuits still more immediately interesting to mankind; and, at any rate, it forms the best comment on the prophetic suggestions in which Dr. Reid occasionally indulges himself concerning the future progress of moral speculation.

"Si homines per tanta annorum spatia viam veram inveniendi et colendi scientias tenuissent, nec tamen ulterius progredi potuissent, audax procul dubio et temeraria foret opinio, posse rem in ulterius provehi. Quod si in *viâ* ipsâ erratum sit, atque hominum opera in iis consumpta in quibus minime oportebat, sequitur ex eo, non in rebus ipsis difficultatem oriri, quæ potestatis nostræ non sunt; sed in intellectu humano, ejusque usu et applicatione, quæ res remedium et medicinam suscipit." * . . . . "De nobis ipsis silemus: de re autem quæ agitur, petimus; Ut homines eam non opinionem, sed opus esse cogitent; ac pro certo habeant, non sectæ nos alicujus, aut placiti, sed utilitatis et amplitudi-

* Nov. Org. 94.

nis humanæ fundamenta moliri. Præterea, ut bene sperent; neque Instaurationem nostram ut quiddam infinitum et ultra mortale fingant, et animo concipiant; quum reverâ sit infiniti erroris finis et terminus legitimus." †

The impression produced on the minds of speculative men, by the publication of Dr. Reid's Inquiry, was full as great as could be expected from the nature of his undertaking. It was a work neither addressed to the multitude, nor level to their comprehension; and the freedom with which it canvassed opinions sanctioned by the highest authorities, was ill calculated to conciliate the favor of the learned. A few, however, habituated, like the author, to the analytical researches of the Newtonian school, soon perceived the extent of his views, and recognised in his pages the genuine spirit and language of inductive investigation. Among the members of this university, Mr. Ferguson was the first to applaud Dr. Reid's success; warmly recommending to his pupils a steady prosecution of the same plan, as the only effectual method of ascertaining the general principles of the human frame: and illustrating happily, by his own profound and eloquent disquisitions, the application of such studies, to the conduct of the understanding, and to the great concerns of life. I recollect, too, when I attended, about the year 1771, the lectures of the late Mr. Russell, to have heard high encomiums on the Philosophy of Reid, in the course of those comprehensive discussions concerning the objects and the rules of experimental science, with which he so agreeably diversified the particular doctrine of physics. Nor must I omit this opportunity of paying a tribute to the memory of my old friend Mr. Stevenson, then Professor of Logic; whose candid mind, at the age of seventy, gave a welcome reception to a system subversive of the theories which he had taught for forty years; and whose zeal for the advancement of knowledge prompted him, when his career was almost finished, to undertake the laborious task of new modelling that useful compilation of elementary instruction, to which a singular diffidence of his own powers limited his literary exertions.

---

* Instaur. Mag. Præfat.

It is with no common feelings of respect and of gratitude, that I now recall the names of those to whom I owe my first attachment to these studies, and the happiness of a liberal occupation superior to the more aspiring aims of a servile ambition.

From the university of Glasgow, Dr. Reid's Inquiry received a still more substantial testimony of approbation; the author having been invited, in 1764, by that learned body, to the professorship of Moral Philosophy, then vacant by the resignation of Mr. Smith. The preferment was in many respects advantageous; affording an income considerably greater than he enjoyed at Aberdeen; and enabling him to concentrate to his favorite objects, that attention which had been hitherto distracted by the miscellaneous nature of his academical engagements. It was not, however, without reluctance, that he consented to tear himself from a spot where he had so long been fastening his roots; and, much as he loved the society in which he passed the remainder of his days, I am doubtful if, in his mind, it compensated the sacrifice of earlier habits and connexions.

Abstracting from the charm of local attachment, the university of Glasgow, at the time when Dr. Reid was adopted as one of its members, presented strong attractions to reconcile him to his change of situation. Robert Simson, the great restorer of ancient geometry, was still alive; and, although far advanced in years, preserved unimpaired his ardor in study, his relish for social relaxation, and his amusing singularities of humor. Dr. Moor combined with a gayety and a levity foreign to this climate, the profound attainments of a scholar and of a mathematician. In Dr. Black, to whose fortunate genius a new world of science had just opened, Reid acknowledged an instructor and a guide; and met a simplicity of manners congenial to his own. The Wilsons, both father and son, were formed to attach his heart by the similarity of their scientific pursuits, and an entire sympathy with his views and sentiments. Nor was he less delighted with the good humored opposition which his opinions never failed to encounter in the acuteness of Millar, then in the vigor of youthful

genius, and warm from the lessons of a different school. Dr. Leechman, the friend and biographer of Hutcheson, was the official head of the college; and added the weight of a venerable name to the reputation of a community, which he had once adorned in a more active station.*

Animated by the zeal of such associates, and by the busy scenes which his new residence presented in every department of useful industry, Dr. Reid entered on his functions at Glasgow, with an ardor not common at the period of life, which he had now attained. His researches concerning the human mind, and the principles of morals, which had occupied but an inconsiderable space in the wide circle of science, allotted to him by his former office, were extended and methodized in a course which employed five hours every week, during six months of the year: the example of his illustrious predecessor, and the prevailing topics of conversation around him, occasionally turned his thoughts to commercial politics, and produced some ingenious essays on different questions connected with trade, which were communicated to a private society of his academical friends: his early passion for the mathematical sciences was revived by the conversation of Simson, Moor, and the Wilsons; and, at the age of fifty-five, he attended the lectures of Black, with a juvenile curiosity and enthusiasm.

As the substance of Dr. Reid's lectures at Glasgow, at least of that part of them which was most important and original, has been since given to the public in a more improved form, it is unnecessary for me to enlarge on the plan which he followed in the discharge of his official duties. I shall therefore only observe, that besides his Speculations on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man, and a System of Practical Ethics, his course comprehended some general views with respect to Natural Jurisprudence, and the fundamental principles of Politics. A few lectures on Rhetoric, which were read, at a separate hour, to a more advanced class

* Note (C.)

of students, formed a voluntary addition to the appropriate functions of his office, to which, it is probable, he was prompted rather by a wish to supply what was then a deficiency in the established course of education, than by any predilection for a branch of study so foreign to his ordinary pursuits.

The merits of Dr. Reid, as a public teacher, were derived chiefly from that rich fund of original and instructive philosophy which is to be found in his writings; and from his unwearied assiduity in inculcating principles which he conceived to be of essential importance to human happiness. In his elocution and mode of instruction, there was nothing peculiarly attractive. He seldom, if ever, indulged himself in the warmth of extempore discourse; nor was his manner of reading calculated to increase the effect of what he had committed to writing. Such, however, was the simplicity and perspicuity of his style; such the gravity and authority of his character; and such the general interest of his young hearers in the doctrines which he taught, that by the numerous audiences to which his instructions were addressed, he was heard uniformly with the most silent and respectful attention. On this subject, I speak from personal knowledge; having had the good fortune, during a considerable part of the winter of 1772, to be one of his pupils.

It does not appear to me, from what I am now able to recollect of the order which he observed in treating the different parts of his subject, that he had laid much stress on systematical arrangement. It is probable, that he availed himself of whatever materials his private inquiries afforded, for his academical compositions; without aiming at the merit of combining them into *a whole*, by a comprehensive and regular design; an undertaking, to which, if I am not mistaken, the established forms of his university, consecrated by long custom, would have presented some obstacles. One thing is certain, that neither he nor his immediate predecessor ever published any general *prospectus* of their respective plans; nor any *heads* or *outlines* to assist their students in tracing the trains of thought which suggested their various transitions.

The interest, however, excited by such details as these, even if it were in my power to render them more full and satisfactory, must necessarily be temporary and local; and I therefore hasten to observations of a more general nature, on the distinguishing characteristics of Dr. Reid's philosophical genius, and on the spirit and scope of those researches which he has bequeathed to posterity, concerning the phenomena and laws of the human mind. In mentioning his first performance on this subject, I have already anticipated a few remarks which are equally applicable to his subsequent publications: but the hints then suggested were too slight, to place in so strong a light as I could wish, the peculiarities of that mode of investigation, which it was the great object of his writings to recommend and to exemplify. His own anxiety, to neglect nothing that might contribute to its farther illustration, induced him, while his health and faculties were yet entire, to withdraw from his public labors; and to devote himself wholly to a task of more extensive and permanent utility. It was in the year 1780 that he carried this design into execution, at a period of life (for he was then seventy) when the infirmities of age might be supposed to account sufficiently for his retreat; but when, in fact, neither the vigor of his mind nor of his body seemed to have suffered any injury from time. The works which he published not many years afterward, afford a sufficient proof of the assiduity with which he had availed himself of his literary leisure; his Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man appearing in 1785; and those on the Active Powers in 1788.

As these two performances are, both of them, parts of one great work, to which his Inquiry into the Human Mind may be regarded as the Introduction, I have reserved for this place whatever critical reflections I have to offer on his merits as an author; conceiving that they would be more likely to produce their intended effect, when presented at once in a connected form, than if interspersed, according to a chronological order, with the details of a biographical narrative.

SECTION II.

Observations on the Spirit and Scope of Dr. Reid's Philosophy.

I HAVE already observed, that the distinguishing feature of Dr. Reid's philosophy, is the systematical steadiness with which he has adhered in his inquiries, to that plan of investigation which is delineated in the Novum Organon, and which has been so happily exemplified in physics by Sir Isaac Newton and his followers. To recommend this plan as the only effectual method of enlarging our knowledge of nature, was the favorite aim of all his studies, and a topic on which he thought he could not enlarge too much, in conversing or corresponding with his younger friends. In a letter to Dr. Gregory, which I have perused, he particularly congratulates him, upon his acquaintance with Lord Bacon's works; adding, "I am very apt to measure a man's understanding, by the opinion he entertains of that author."

It were perhaps to be wished, that he had taken a little more pains to illustrate the fundamental rules of that logic, the value of which he estimated so highly; more especially, to point out the modifications with which it is applicable to the science of mind. Many important hints, indeed, connected with this subject, may be collected from different parts of his writings; but I am inclined to think, that a more ample discussion of it in a preliminary dissertation, might have thrown light on the scope of many of his researches, and obviated some of the most plausible objections which have been stated to his conclusions.

It is not, however, my intention at present, to attempt to supply a *desideratum* of so great a magnitude; an undertaking which, I trust, will find a more convenient place, in the farther prosecution of those speculations with respect to the Intellectual Powers which I have already submitted to the public. The detached remarks which follow, are offered merely as a supplement to what I have stated concerning the nature and object of

this branch of study, in the introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

The influence of Bacon's genius on the subsequent progress of physical discovery, has been seldom fairly appreciated; by some writers almost entirely overlooked; and by others considered as the sole cause of the reformation in science which has since taken place. Of these two extremes, the latter certainly is the least wide of the truth; for in the whole history of letters, no other individual can be mentioned, whose exertions have had so indisputable an effect in forwarding the intellectual progress of mankind. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that before the era when Bacon appeared, various philosophers in different parts of Europe had struck into the right path; and it may perhaps be doubted, whether any one important rule with respect to the true method of investigation be contained in his works, of which no hint can be traced in those of his predecessors. His great merit lay in concentrating their feeble and scattered lights; fixing the attention of philosophers on the distinguishing characteristics of true and of false science, by a felicity of illustration peculiar to himself, seconded by the commanding powers of a bold and figurative eloquence. The method of investigation which he recommended had been previously followed in every instance in which any solid discovery had been made with respect to the laws of nature; but it had been followed accidentally, and without any regular, preconceived design; and it was reserved for him to reduce to rule and method what others had effected, either fortuitously, or from some momentary glimpse of the truth. It is justly observed by Dr. Reid, that "the man who first discovered that cold freezes water, and that heat turns it into vapor, proceeded on the same general principle by which Newton discovered the law of gravitation and the properties of light. His Regulæ Philosophandi are maxims of common sense, and are practised every day in common life; and he who philosophizes by other rules, either concerning the material system or concerning the mind, mistakes his aim."

These remarks are not intended to detract from the

just glory of Bacon; for they apply to all those, without exception, who have systematized the principles of any of the arts. Indeed, they apply less forcibly to him, than to any other philosopher whose studies have been directed to objects analogous to his; inasmuch as we know of no art, of which the rules have been reduced successfully into a didactic form, when the art itself was as much in infancy as experimental philosophy was when Bacon wrote. Nor must it be supposed, that the utility was small of thus attempting to systematize the accidental processes of unenlightened ingenuity, and to give to the noblest exertions of human reason, the same advantages of scientific method, which have contributed so much to ensure the success of genius in pursuits of inferior importance. The very philosophical motto which Reynolds has so happily prefixed to his Academical Discourses, admits on this occasion, of a still more appropriate application: "Omnia fere quæ præceptis continentur ab ingeniosis hominibus fiunt; sed casu quodam magis quam scientiâ. Ideoque doctrina et animadversio adhibenda est, ut ea quæ interdum sine ratione nobis occurrunt semper in nostrâ potestate sint; et quoties res postulaverit, a nobis ex præparato adhibeantur."

But although a few superior minds seem to have been in some measure predisposed for that revolution in science which Bacon contributed so powerfully to accomplish, the case was very different with the great majority of those who were then most distinguished for learning and talents. His views were plainly too advanced for the age in which he lived; and, that he was sensible of this himself, appears from those remarkable passages, in which he styles himself "the servant of posterity," and "bequeaths his fame to future times." Hobbes, who in his early youth, had enjoyed his friendship, speaks, a considerable time after Bacon's death, of experimental philosophy, in terms of contempt; influenced probably, not a little, by the tendency he perceived in the inductive method of inquiry, to undermine the foundations of that fabric of scepticism which it was the great object of his labors to rear. Nay, even during the course of the last century, it has been less from Bacon's own

speculations, than from the examples of sound investigation exhibited by a few eminent men, who professed to follow him as their guide, that the practical spirit of his writings has been caught by the multitude of physical experimentalists over Europe; truth and good sense descending gradually, in this as in other instances, by the force of imitation and of early habit, from the higher orders of intellect to the lower. In some parts of the continent, more especially, the circulation of Bacon's philosophical works has been surprisingly slow. It is doubtful whether Descartes himself ever perused them; and as late as the year 1759, if we may credit Montucla, they were very little known in France. The introductory discourse prefixed by D'Alembert to the Encyclopédie, first recommended them, in that country, to general attention.

The change which has taken place during the two last centuries in the plan of physical research, and the success which has so remarkably attended it, could not fail to suggest an idea, that something analogous might probably be accomplished at a future period, with respect to the phenomena of the intellectual world. And accordingly, various hints of this kind may be traced in different authors, since the era of Newton's discoveries. A memorable instance occurs in the prediction with which that great man concludes his Optics; "That if natural philosophy, in all its parts, by pursuing the inductive method, shall at length be perfected, the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged." Similar remarks may be found in other publications; particularly in Mr. Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, where the subject is enlarged on with much ingenuity. As far, however, as I am able to judge, Dr. Reid was the first who conceived justly and clearly the analogy between these two different branches of human knowledge; defining with precision the distinct provinces of observation and of reflection, in furnishing the *data* of all our reasonings concerning matter and mind; and demonstrating the necessity of a careful separation between the phenomena which they respectively exhibit, while we adhere to the same mode of philosophizing in investigating the laws of both.

That so many philosophers should have thus missed their aim, in prosecuting the study of the human mind, will appear the less surprising, when we consider, in how many difficulties, peculiar to itself, this science is involved. It is sufficient at present to mention those which arise, from the metaphorical origin of all the words which express the intellectual phenomena; from the subtle and fugitive nature of the objects of our reasonings; from the habits of inattention we acquire, in early life, to the subjects of our consciousness; and from the prejudices which early impressions and associations create to warp our opinions. It must be remembered, too, that in the science of mind; so imperfectly are its logical rules as yet understood! we have not the same checks on the abuses of our reasoning powers, which serve to guard us against error in our other researches. In physics, a speculative mistake is abandoned, when contradicted by facts which strike the senses. In mathematics, an absurd or inconsistent conclusion is admitted as a demonstrative proof of a faulty hypothesis. But, in those inquiries which relate to the principles of human nature, the absurdities and inconsistencies to which we are led by almost all the systems hitherto proposed, instead of suggesting corrections and improvements on these systems, have too frequently had the effect of producing scepticism with respect to all of them alike. How melancholy is the confession of Hume! "The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason, has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another."

Under these discouragements to this branch of study, it affords some comfort to reflect on the great number of important facts with respect to the mind, which are scattered in the writings of philosophers. As the subject of our inquiry here lies within our own breast, a considerable mixture of truth may be expected even in those systems which are most erroneous; not only because a number of men can scarcely be long imposed on by an hypothesis which is perfectly

groundless, concerning the objects of their own consciousness; but because it is generally by an alliance with truth and with the original principles of human nature, that prejudices and associations produce their effects. Perhaps it may even be affirmed, that our progress in this research depends less on the degree of our industry and invention, than on our sagacity and good sense in separating old discoveries from the errors which have been blended with them; and on that candid and dispassionate temper that may prevent us from being led astray by the love of novelty, or the affectation of singularity. In this respect, the science of mind possesses a very important advantage over that which relates to the laws of the material world. The former has been cultivated with more or less success in all ages and countries: the facts which serve as the basis of the latter have, with a very few exceptions, been collected during the course of the two last centuries. An observation similar to this is applied to systems of Ethics by Mr. Smith, in his account of the theory of Mandeville; and the illustration he gives of it may be extended with equal propriety to the science of mind in general. "A system of Natural Philosophy," he remarks, "may appear very plausible, and be, for a long time, very generally received in the world, and yet have no foundation in nature, nor any sort of resemblance to the truth. But it is otherwise with systems of Moral Philosophy. When a traveller gives an account of some distant country, he may impose upon our credulity the most groundless and absurd fictions as the most certain matters of fact; but when a person pretends to inform us of what passes in our neighbourhood, and of the affairs of the very parish we live in, though here too, if we are so careless as not to examine things with our own eyes, he may deceive us in many respects; yet the greatest falsehoods which he imposes on us must bear some resemblance to the truth, and must even have a considerable mixture of truth in them."

These considerations demonstrate the essential importance, in this branch of study, of forming, at the commencement of our inquiries, just notions of the

criteria of true and false science, and of the rules of philosophical investigation. They demonstrate, at the same time, that an attention to the rules of philosophizing, as they are exemplified in the physical researches of Newton and his followers, although the best of all preparations for an examination of the mental phenomena, is but one of the steps necessary to ensure our success. On an accurate comparison of the two subjects, it might probably appear, that after this preliminary step has been gained, the most arduous part of the process still remains. One thing is certain, that it is not from any defect in the power of ratiocination or deduction, that our speculative errors chiefly arise; a fact of which we have a decisive proof in the facility with which most students may be taught the mathematical and physical sciences, when compared with the difficulty of leading their minds to the truth on questions of morals and politics.

The logical rules which lay the foundation of sound and useful conclusions concerning the laws of this internal world, although not altogether overlooked by Lord Bacon, were plainly not the principal object of his work; and what he has written on the subject, consists chiefly of detached hints dropped casually in the course of other speculations. A comprehensive view of the sciences and arts dependent on the philosophy of the human mind, exhibiting the relations which they bear to each other, and to the general system of human knowledge, would form a natural and useful introduction to the study of these logical principles; but such a view remains still a *desideratum*, after all the advances made toward it by Bacon and D'Alembert. Indeed, in the present improved state of things, much is wanting to complete and perfect that more simple part of their intellectual map which relates to the material universe. Of the inconsiderable progress hitherto made toward a just delineation of the method to be pursued in studying the mental phenomena, no other evidence is necessary than this; that the sources of error and false judgment so peculiarly connected, in consequence of the association of ideas, with studies in which our best interests are immediately and deeply concerned,

have never yet been investigated with such accuracy, as to afford effectual aid to the student, in his attempts to counteract their influence. One of these sources alone, that which arises from the imperfections of language, furnishes an exception to the general remark. It attracted, fortunately, the particular notice of Locke, whose observations with respect to it, compose, perhaps, the most valuable part of his philosophical writings; and, since the time of Condillac, the subject has been still more deeply analyzed by others. Even on this article, much yet remains to be done; but enough has been already accomplished to justify the profound aphorism in which Bacon pointed it out to the attention of his followers: "Credunt homines rationem suam verbis imperare; sed fit etiam ut verba vim suam super rationem retorqueant." *

Into these logical discussions concerning the means of advancing the philosophy of human nature, Dr. Reid has seldom entered; and still more rarely has he indulged himself in tracing the numerous relations, by which this philosophy is connected with the practical business of life. But he has done what was still more essential at the time he wrote: he has exemplified, with the happiest success, that method of investigation by which alone any solid progress can be made; directing his inquiries to a subject which forms a necessary groundwork for the labors of his successors; an analysis of the various powers and principles belonging to our constitution. Of the importance of this undertaking, it is sufficient to observe, that it stands somewhat, although I confess not altogether, in the same relation to the different branches of intellectual and moral science, such as grammar, rhetoric, logic, ethics, natural theology, and politics, in which the anatomy of the human body stands to the different branches of physiology and pathology. And as a course of medical education naturally, or rather necessarily, begins with a general survey of man's animal frame; so, I apprehend, that the proper, or rather the

* This passage of Bacon forms the motto to a very ingenious and philosophical dissertation, lately published by M. Prévost of Geneva, entitled, "Des Signes envisagés relativement à leur Influence sur la Formation des Idées." Paris, an 8.

essential preparation for those studies which regard our nobler concerns, is an examination of the principles which belong to man as an intelligent, active, social, and moral being. Nor does the importance of such an analysis rest here; it exerts an influence over all those sciences and arts which are connected with the material world; and the philosophy of Bacon itself, while it points out the road to physical truth, is but a branch of the philosophy of the human mind.

The substance of these remarks is admirably expressed by Mr. Hume in the following passage; allowances being made for a few trifling peculiarities of expression, borrowed from the theories which were prevalent at the time when he wrote: "'T is evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature, and that, however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of man; since they lie under the cognizance of men and are judged of by their powers and faculties. It is impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences, were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding, and could explain the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings.

"If, therefore, the sciences of mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural religion, have such a dependence on the knowledge of man, what may be expected in the other sciences, whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate? The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments; and politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other. In these four sciences of logic, morals, criticism, and politics, is comprehended almost every thing which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind.

"Here then, is the only expedient from which we can

hope for success in our philosophical researches; to leave the tedious, lingering method, which we have hitherto followed; and instead of taking, now and then, a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or centre of these sciences, to human nature itself; which being once masters of, we may every where else hope for an easy victory. From this station, we may extend our conquests over all those sciences which more intimately concern human life, and may afterward proceed at leisure to discover more fully those which are the objects of pure curiosity. There is no question of importance, whose decision is not comprised in the science of man; and there is none which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science."

To prepare the way for the accomplishment of the design so forcibly recommended in the foregoing quotation, by exemplifying, in an analysis of our most important intellectual and active principles, the only method of carrying it successfully into execution, was the great object of Dr. Reid, in all his various philosophical publications. In examining these principles, he had chiefly in view a vindication of those fundamental laws of belief which form the groundwork of human knowledge, against the attacks made on their authority in some modern systems of scepticism; leaving to his successors the more agreeable task of applying the philosophy of the mind to its practical uses. On the *analysis* and classification of our powers, which he has proposed, much room for improvement must have been left in so vast an undertaking; but imperfections of this kind do not necessarily affect the justness of his conclusions, even where they may suggest to future inquirers the advantages of a simpler arrangement, and a more definite phraseology. Nor must it be forgotten, that, in consequence of the plan he has followed, the mistakes which may be detected in particular parts of his works, imply no such weakness in the fabric he has reared, as might have been justly apprehended, had he presented a connected system founded on gratuitous hypotheses, or on arbitrary definitions. The detections, on the contrary, of his

occasional errors, may be expected, from the invariable consistency and harmony of truth, to throw new lights on those speculations which he has conducted with greater success; as the correction of a particular misstatement in an authentic history, is often found, by completing an imperfect link, or reconciling a seeming contradiction, to dispel the doubts which hung over the most faithful and accurate details of the narrative.

In Dr. Reid's first performance, he confined himself entirely to the five senses, and the principles of our nature necessarily connected with them; reserving the further prosecution of the subject for a future period. At that time, indeed, he seems to have thought, that a more comprehensive examination of the mind was an enterprise too great for one individual. "The powers," he observes, "of memory, of imagination, of taste, of reasoning, of moral perception, the will, the passions, the affections, and all the active powers of the soul, present a boundless field of philosophical disquisition, which the author of this Inquiry is far from thinking himself able to explore with accuracy. Many authors of ingenuity, ancient and modern, have made incursions into this vast territory, and have communicated useful observations; but there is reason to believe, that those who have pretended to give us a map of the whole, have satisfied themselves with a very inaccurate and incomplete survey. If Galileo had attempted a complete system of natural philosophy, he had probably done little service to mankind; but, by confining himself to what was within his comprehension, he laid the foundation, of a system of knowledge, which rises by degrees, and does honor to the human understanding. Newton, building upon this foundation, and in like manner, confining his inquiries to the law of gravitation, and the properties of light, performed wonders. If he had attempted a great deal more, he had done a great deal less, and perhaps nothing at all. Ambitious of following such great examples, with unequal steps, alas! and unequal force, we have attempted an inquiry into one little corner only, of the human mind; that corner which seems to be most exposed to vulgar observation, and to be most easily com-

prehended; and yet, if we have delineated it justly, it must be acknowledged, that the accounts heretofore given of it were very lame, and wide of the truth." From these observations, when compared with the magnitude of the work which the author lived to execute, there is some ground for supposing, that, in the progress of his researches, he became more and more sensible of the mutual connexion and dependence which exists among the conclusions we form concerning the various principles of human nature; even concerning those which seem, on a superficial view, to have the most remote relation to each other. And it was fortunate for the world, that, in this respect, he was induced to extend his views so far beyond the limits of his original design. His examination, indeed, of the powers of external perception, and of the questions immediately connected with them, bears marks of a still more minute diligence and accuracy than appear in some of his speculations concerning the other parts of our frame; and what he has written on the former subject, in his Inquiry into the Human Mind, is evidently more highly finished both in matter and form, than the volumes which he published in his more advanced years. The value, however, of these is inestimable to future adventurers in the same arduous undertaking; not only, in consequence of the aids they furnish as a rough draught of the field to be examined, but, by the example they exhibit of a method of investigation on such subjects, hitherto very imperfectly understood by philosophers. It is by the originality of this method, so systematically pursued in all his researches, still more than by the importance of his particular conclusions, that he stands so conspicuously distinguished among those who have hitherto prosecuted analytically the study of man.

I have heard it sometimes mentioned, as a subject of regret, that the writers who have applied themselves to this branch of knowledge, have, in general, aimed at a great deal more than it was possible to accomplish; extending their researches to all the different parts of our constitution, while a long life might be well employed in examining and describing the phenomena connected

with any one particular faculty. Dr. Reid, in a passage already quoted from his Inquiry, might have been supposed to give some countenance to this opinion; if his own subsequent labors did not so strongly sanction the practice in question. The truth, I apprehend, is, that such detached researches concerning the human mind, can seldom be attempted with much hope of success; and that those who have recommended them, have not attended sufficiently to the circumstances which so remarkably distinguish this study, from that which has for its object the philosophy of the material world. A few remarks in illustration of this proposition seem to me to be necessary, in order to justify the reasonableness of Dr. Reid's undertaking; and they will be found to apply with still greater force, to the labors of such, as may wish to avail themselves of a similar analysis in explaining the varieties of human genius and character, or in developing the latent capacities of the youthful mind.

One consideration of a more general nature is, in the first place, worthy of notice; that in the infancy of every science, the grand and fundamental *desideratum* is a bold and comprehensive outline; somewhat for the same reason, that, in the cultivation of an extensive country, forests must be cleared, and wildernesses reclaimed, before the limits of private property are fixed with accuracy; and long before the period, when the divisions and subdivisions of separate possessions give rise to the details of a curious and refined husbandry. The speculations of Lord Bacon embraced all the objects of human knowledge. Those of Newton and Boyle were confined to physics; but including an astonishing range of the material universe. The labors of their successors in our own times, have been employed with no less zeal, in pursuing those more particular, but equally abstruse investigations, in which they were unable to engage, for want of a sufficient stock, both of facts and of general principles; and which did not perhaps interest their curiosity in any considerable degree.

If these observations are allowed to hold to a certain extent with respect to all the sciences, they apply in a

more peculiar manner to the subjects treated of in Dr. Reid's writings; subjects which are all so intimately connected, that it may be doubted, if it be possible to investigate any one completely, without some general acquaintance, at least, with the rest. Even the theory of the understanding may receive important lights from an examination of the active and the moral powers; the state of which in the mind of every individual, will be found to have a powerful influence on his intellectual character: while, on the other hand, an accurate analysis of the faculties of the understanding would probably go far to obviate the sceptical difficulties which have been started concerning the origin of our moral ideas. It appears to me, therefore, that, whatever be the department of mental science that we propose more particularly to cultivate, it is necessary to begin with a survey of human nature in all its various parts; studying these parts, however, not so much on their own account, as with a reference to the applications of which our conclusions are susceptible to our favorite purpose. The researches of Dr. Reid, when considered carefully in the relation which they bear to each other, afford numberless illustrations of the truth of this remark. His leading design was evidently to overthrow the modern system of scepticism; and at every successive step of his progress, new and unexpected lights break in on his fundamental principles.

It is, however, chiefly in their practical application to the conduct of the understanding, and the culture of the heart, that such partial views are likely to be dangerous; for here they tend not only to mislead our theoretical conclusions, but to counteract our improvement and happiness. Of this I am so fully convinced, that the most faulty theories of human nature, provided only they embrace the whole of it, appear to me less mischievous in their probable effects, than those more accurate and microscopical researches which are habitually confined to one particular corner of our constitution. It is easy to conceive, that where the attention is wholly engrossed with the intellectual powers, the moral principles will be in danger of running to waste:

and it is no less certain, on the other hand, that, by confining our care to the moral constitution alone, we may suffer the understanding to remain under the influence of unhappy prejudices, and destitute of those just and enlightened views, without which the worthiest dispositions are of little use, either to ourselves or society. An exclusive attention to any one of the subordinate parts of our frame, to the culture of taste, for example, or of the argumentative powers, or even to the refinement of our moral sentiments and feelings, must be attended with a hazard proportionally greater.

"In forming the human character," says Bacon, in a passage which Lord Bolingbroke has pronounced to be one of the finest and deepest in his writings, "we must not proceed, as a statuary does in forming a statue, who works sometimes on the face, sometimes on the limbs, sometimes on the folds of the drapery; but we must proceed, and it is in our power to proceed, as nature does in forming a flower, or any other of her productions; she throws out altogether, and at once, the whole system of being, and the rudiments of all the parts. *Rudimenta partium omnium simul parit et producit.*" *

Of this passage, so strongly marked with Bacon's capacious intellect, and so richly adorned with his "philosophical fancy," † I will not weaken the impression by any comment; and, indeed, to those who do not intuitively perceive its evidence, no comment would be useful.

In what I have hitherto said of Dr. Reid's speculations, I have confined myself to such general views of the scope of his researches, and of his mode of philosophizing, as seemed most likely to facilitate the perusal of his works to those readers who have not been much conversant with these abstract disquisitions. A slight review of some of the more important and fundamental objections which have been proposed to his doctrines,

* In the foregoing paragraph, I have borrowed, with a very trifling alteration, Lord Bolingbroke's words, in a beautiful paraphrase on Bacon's remark. See his Idea of a Patriot King.

† An expression applied by Gibbon to the eloquence of Burke.

may, I hope, be useful as a farther preparation for the same course of study.

Of these objections, the four following appear to me to be chiefly entitled to attention.

1. That he has assumed gratuitously in all his reasonings, that theory concerning the human soul, which the scheme of materialism calls in question.

2. That his views tend to damp the ardor of philosophical curiosity, by stating as ultimate facts, phenomena which may be resolved into principles more simple and general.

3. That, by an unnecessary multiplication of original or instinctive principles, he has brought the science of mind into a state more perplexed and unsatisfactory, than that in which it was left by Locke and his successors.

4. That his philosophy, by sanctioning an appeal from the decisions of the learned to the voice of the multitude, is unfavorable to a spirit of free inquiry, and lends additional stability to popular errors.

1. With respect to Dr. Reid's supposed assumption of a doubtful hypothesis concerning the nature of the thinking and sentient principle, it is almost sufficient for me to observe, that the charge is directed against that very point of his philosophy in which it is most completely invulnerable. The circumstance which peculiarly characterizes the inductive science of mind is, that it professes to abstain from all speculations concerning its nature and essence; confining the attention entirely to *phenomena*, for which we have the evidence of consciousness, and to the laws by which these phenomena are regulated. In this respect, it differs equally, in its scope, from the pneumatological discussions of the schools; and from the no less visionary theories, so loudly vaunted by the physiological metaphysicians of more modern times. Compared with the first, it differs, as the inquiries of the *mechanical* philosophers concerning the laws of moving bodies, differ from the discussions of the ancient sophists concerning the existence and the nature of motion. Compared with the other, the difference is analogous to what exists between the

conclusions of Newton concerning the law of gravitation, and his *query* concerning the invisible ether of which he supposed it might, possibly, be the effect. The facts which this inductive science aims at ascertaining, rest on their own proper evidence; an evidence unconnected with all these hypotheses, and which would not, in the smallest degree, be affected, although the truth of any one of them should be fully established. It is not, therefore, on account of its inconsistency with any favorite opinions of my own, that I would oppose the disquisitions either of scholastic pneumatology, or of physiological metaphysics; but because I consider them as an idle waste of time and genius, on questions where our conclusions can neither be verified nor overturned by an appeal to experiment or observation. Sir Isaac Newton's query concerning the cause of gravitation was certainly not *inconsistent* with his own discoveries concerning its laws; but what would have been the consequences to the world, if he had indulged himself in the prosecution of hypothetical theories with respect to the former, instead of directing his astonishing powers to an investigation of the latter?

That the general spirit of Dr. Reid's philosophy is hostile to the conclusions of the materialist, is indeed a fact: not, however, because his system rests on the contrary hypothesis as a fundamental principle, but because his inquiries have a powerful tendency to wean the understanding gradually from those obstinate associations and prejudices, to which the common mechanical theories of mind owe all their plausibility. It is, in truth, much more from such examples of sound research concerning the laws of thought, than from any direct metaphysical refutation, that a change is to be expected in the opinions of those who have been accustomed to confound together two classes of phenomena, so completely and essentially different. But this view of the subject does not belong to the present argument.

It has been recommended of late, by a medical author of great reputation, to those who wish to study the human mind, to begin with preparing themselves for the

task by the study of anatomy. I must confess, I cannot perceive the advantages of this order of investigation; as the anatomy of the body does not seem to me more likely to throw light on the philosophy of the mind, than an analysis of the mind to throw light on the physiology of the body. To ascertain, indeed, the general laws of their connexion from facts established by observation or experiment, is a reasonable and most interesting object of philosophical curiosity; and in this inquiry, which was long ago proposed and recommended by Lord Bacon, a knowledge of the constitution both of mind and body is indispensably requisite; but even here, if we wish to proceed on firm ground, the two classes of facts must be kept completely distinct; so that neither of them may be warped or distorted, in consequence of theories suggested by their supposed relations or analogies.* Thus, in many of the phenomena, connected with custom and habit, there is ample scope for investigating general laws, both with respect to our mental and our corporeal frame; but what light do we derive from such information concerning this part of our constitution as is contained in the following sentence of Locke? "Habits seem to be but trains of motion in the animal spirits, which, once set a-going, continue in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path." In like manner, the laws which regulate the connexion between the mind and our external organs, in the case of perception, have furnished a very fertile subject of examination to some of the best of our modern philosophers; but how impotent does the genius of Newton itself appear, when it attempts to shoot the gulf which separates the sensible world, and the sentient principle? "Is not the sensorium of animals," he asks in one of his queries, "the place where the sentient substance is present, and to which the sensible species of things are brought through the nerves and brain, that they may be perceived by the mind present in that place?"

It ought to be remembered also, that this inquiry,

---

*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. I. pp. 11, 12, 2d. edit.

with respect to the laws regulating the connexion between our bodily organization, and the phenomena subjected to our own consciousness, is but one particular department of the philosophy of the mind; and that there still remains a wide and indeed boundless region, where all our *data* must be obtained from our own mental operations. In examining, for instance, the powers of judgment and reasoning, let any person of sound understanding, after perusing the observations of Bacon on the different classes of our prejudices, or those of Locke on the abuse of words, turn his attention to the speculations of some of our contemporary theorists; and he will at once perceive the distinction between the two modes of investigation which I wish at present to contrast. "Reasoning," says one of the most ingenious, and original of these, "is that operation of the *sensorium*, by which we excite two or many tribes of ideas; and then re-excite the ideas, in which they differ or correspond. If we determine this difference, it is called judgment; if we in vain endeavour to determine it, it is called doubting. If we re-excite the ideas in which they differ, it is called distinguishing; if we re-excite those in which they correspond, it is called comparing." * In what acceptation the word *idea* is to be understood in the foregoing passage, may be learned from the following definition of the same author: "The word *idea* has various meanings in the writers of metaphysic: it is here used simply for those notions of external things, which our organs of sense bring us acquainted with originally; and is defined, a contraction, or motion, or configuration of the fibres, which constitute the immediate organ of sense." † Mr. Hume, who was less of a physiologist than Dr. Darwin, has made use of a language by no means so theoretical and arbitrary; but still widely removed from the simplicity and precision essentially necessary in studies, where every thing depends on the cautious use of terms. "Belief," according to him, is "a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression; memory is the faculty

* Zoonomia, vol. i. p. 181. 3d edit. † Ibid. vol. i. pp. 11, 12.

by which we repeat our impressions, so as that they retain a considerable degree of their first vivacity, and are somewhat intermediate betwixt an idea and an impression."

According to the views of Dr. Reid, the terms which express the simple powers of the mind, are considered as unsusceptible of definition or explanation; the words, *feeling*, for example, *knowledge*, *will*, *doubt*, *belief*, being in this respect on the same footing with the words, *green* or *scarlet*, *sweet* or *bitter*. To the names of these mental operations, all men annex some notions, more or less distinct; and the only way of conveying to them notions more correct, is by teaching them to exercise their own powers of reflection. The definitions quoted from Hume and Darwin, even if they were more unexceptionable in point of phraseology, would, for these reasons, be unphilosophical, as attempts to simplify what is incapable of analysis; but as they are actually stated, they not only envelope truth in mystery, but lay a foundation, at the very outset, for an erroneous theory. It is worth while to add, that of the two theories in question, that of Darwin, how inferior soever, in the estimation of competent judges, as a philosophical work, is by far the best calculated to impose on a very wide circle of readers, by the mixture it exhibits of crude and visionary metaphysics, with those important facts and conclusions which might be expected from the talents and experience of such a writer, in the present advanced state of medical and physiological science. The questions which have been hitherto confined to a few, prepared for such discussions by habits of philosophical study, are thus submitted to the consideration, not only of the cultivated and enlightened minds, which adorn the medical profession, but of the half-informed multitude who follow the medical trade: nor is it to be doubted, that many of these will give the author credit, upon subjects of which they feel themselves incompetent to judge, for the same ability which he displays within their own professional sphere. The hypothetical principles assumed by Hume are intelligible to those only who are familiarized to the language of the schools; and his ingenuity and elegance,

captivating as they are to men of taste and refinement, possess slight attractions to the majority of such as are most likely to be misled by his conclusions.

After all, I do not apprehend that the physiological theories concerning the mind, which have made so much noise of late, will produce a very lasting impression. The splendor of Dr. Darwin's accomplishments could not fail to bestow a temporary importance on whatever opinions were sanctioned by his name; as the chemical discoveries which have immortalized that of Priestley, have, for a while, recalled from oblivion the reveries of Hartley. But, abstracting from these accidental instances, in which human reason seems to have held a retrograde course, there has certainly been, since the time of Descartes, a continual, and, on the whole, a very remarkable approach to the inductive plan of studying human nature. We may trace this in the writings even of those who profess to consider *thought* merely as *an agitation of the brain;* in the writings more particularly of Hume and of Helvetius; both of whom, although they may have occasionally expressed themselves in an unguarded manner concerning the nature of mind, have, in their most useful and practical disquisitions, been prevented, by their own good sense, from blending any theory with respect to the *causes* of the intellectual phenomena, with the history of facts, or the investigation of general laws. The authors who form the most conspicuous exceptions to this gradual progress, consist chiefly of men, whose errors may be easily accounted for, by the prejudices connected with their circumscribed habits of observation and inquiry; of physiologists, accustomed to attend to that part alone of the human frame, which the knife of the anatomist can lay open; or of chemists, who enter on the analysis of thought, fresh from the decompositions of the laboratory; carrying into the theory of mind itself, what Bacon expressively calls, "the smoke and tarnish of the furnace." Of the value of such pursuits, none can think more highly than myself; but I must be allowed to observe, that the most distinguished preeminence in them does not necessarily imply a capacity of collected and abstracted

reflection, or an understanding superior to the prejudices of early association, and the illusions of popular language. I will not go so far as Cicero, when he ascribes to those who possess these advantages, a more than ordinary vigor of intellect: "Magni est ingenii revocare mentem a sensibus, et cogitationem a consuetudine abducere." I would only claim for them, the merit of patient and cautious research; and would exact from their antagonists the same qualifications.*

In offering these remarks, I have no wish to exalt any one branch of useful knowledge at the expense of another, but to combat prejudices equally fatal to the progress of them all. With the same view, I cannot help taking notice of a prevailing, but very mistaken idea, that the formation of a hypothetical system is a stronger proof of inventive genius, than the patient investigation of nature in the way of induction. To form a system, appears to the young and inexperienced understanding, a species of creation; to ascend slowly to general conclusions, from the observation and comparison of particular facts, is to comment servilely on the works of another.

No opinion, surely, can be more groundless. To fix on a few principles, or even on a single principle, as the foundation of a theory; and by an artful statement of supposed facts, aided by a dexterous use of language, to give a plausible explanation, by means of it, of an immense number of phenomena; is within the reach of most men whose talents have been a little exercised among the subtilties of the schools: whereas, to follow nature through all her varieties with a quick yet an exact eye; to record faithfully what she exhibits, and to record nothing more; to trace, amidst the diversity of her operations, the simple and comprehensive laws by which they are regulated, and sometimes to guess at the beneficent purposes to which they are subservient; may be safely pronounced to be the highest effort of a created intelligence. And, accordingly, the number of ingenious theorists has, in every age, been great; that of sound philosophers has been wonderfully small; or rath-

*Note (D.)

er, they are only beginning now to have a glimpse of their way, in consequence of the combined lights furnished by their predecessors.

Descartes aimed at a complete system of physics, deduced *à priori* from the abstract suggestions of his own reason: Newton aspired no higher, than at a faithful "interpretation of nature," in a few of the more general laws which she presents to our notice: and yet the intellectual power displayed in the voluminous writings of the former vanishes into nothing, when compared with what we may trace in a single page of the latter. On this occasion a remark of Lord Bacon appears singularly apposite; that "Alexander and Cæsar, though they acted without the aid of magic or prodigy, performed exploits that are truly greater than what fable reports of king Arthur or Amadis de Gaul."

I shall only add farther on this head, that the last observation holds more strictly with respect to the philosophy of the human mind, than any other branch of science; for there is no subject whatever, on which it is so easy to form theories calculated to impose on the multitude; and none, where the discovery of truth is attended with so many difficulties. One great cause of this is, the analogical or theoretical terms employed in ordinary language to express every thing relating either to our intellectual or active powers; in consequence of which, specious explanations of the most mysterious phenomena may be given to superficial inquirers; while, at the same time, the labor of just investigation is increased to an incalculable degree.

2. To allege, that "this circumscription of the field of our inquiries concerning the mind tends to damp the ardor of philosophical curiosity," is a charge not less unfounded than the former; inasmuch as every physical inquiry concerning the material world is circumscribed by limits precisely analogous. In all our investigations, whatever their subject may be, the business of philosophy is confined to a reference of particular facts to other facts more general; and our most successful researches must at length terminate in some law of nature, of which no explanation can be given. In its application

to Dr. Reid, this objection has, I think, been more pointedly directed against his reasonings concerning the process of nature in perception; a part of his writings which, as it is of fundamental importance in his general system, he has labored with peculiar care. The result is, indeed, by no means flattering to the pride of those theorists, who profess to explain every thing; for it amounts to an acknowledgment, that, after all the lights which anatomy and physiology supply, the information we obtain, by means of our senses, concerning the existence and the qualities of matter, is no less incomprehensible to our faculties, than it appears to the most illiterate peasant; and that all we have gained, is a more precise and complete acquaintance with some particulars in our animal economy, highly interesting indeed when regarded in their proper light, as accessions to our physical knowledge, but, considered in connexion with the philosophy of the mind, affording only a more accurate statement of the astonishing phenomena which we would vainly endeavour to explain. This language has been charged, but most unjustly and ignorantly, with *mysticism;* for the same charge may be brought, with equal fairness, against all the most important discoveries in the sciences. It was in truth, the very objection urged against Newton, when his adversaries contended, that *gravity* was to be ranked with the *occult qualities* of the schoolmen, till its mechanical cause should be assigned; and the answer given to this objection by Sir Isaac Newton's commentator, Mr. Maclaurin, may be literally applied, in the instance before us, to the inductive philosophy of the human mind.

"The opponents of Newton, finding nothing to object to his observations and reasonings, pretended to find a resemblance between his doctrines and the exploded tenets of the scholastic philosophy. They triumphed mightily in treating gravity as an occult quality, because he did not pretend to deduce this principle fully from its cause. . . . . I know not that ever it was made an objection to the circulation of the blood, that there is no small difficulty in accounting for it mechanically. They, too, who first extended gravity to air, vapor, and to all

bodies round the earth, had their praise; though the cause of gravity was as obscure as before; or *rather appeared more mysterious*, after they had shown, that there was no body found near the earth, exempt from gravity, that might be supposed to be its cause. Why, then, were his admirable discoveries, by which this principle was extended over the universe, so ill relished by some philosophers? The truth is, he had, with great evidence, overthrown the boasted schemes by which they pretended to unravel all the mysteries of nature; and the philosophy he introduced, in place of them, carrying with it a sincere confession of our being far from a complete and perfect knowledge of it, could not please those who had been accustomed to imagine themselves possessed of the eternal reasons and primary causes of all things.

"It was, however, no new thing that this philosophy should meet with opposition. All the useful discoveries that were made in former times, and particularly in the seventeenth century, had to struggle with the prejudices of those who had accustomed themselves, not so much as to think but in a certain systematic way; who could not be prevailed on to abandon their favorite schemes, while they were able to imagine the least pretext for continuing the dispute. Every art and talent was displayed to support their falling cause; no aid seemed foreign to them that could in any manner annoy their adversary; and such often was their obstinacy, that truth was able to make little progress, till they were succeeded by younger persons, who had not so strongly imbibed their prejudices."

These excellent observations are not the less applicable to the subject now under consideration, that the part of Dr. Reid's writings which suggested the quotation, leads only to the correction of an inveterate prejudice, not to any new general conclusion. It is probable, indeed, now that the Ideal Theory has in a great measure disappeared from our late metaphysical systems, that those who have a pleasure in detracting from the merits of their predecessors, may be disposed to represent it as an idle waste of labor and ingenuity, to

have entered into a serious refutation of an hypothesis at once gratuitous and inconceivable. A different judgment, however, will be formed by such, as are acquainted with the extensive influence, which, from the earliest accounts of science, this single prejudice has had in vitiating almost every branch of the philosophy of the mind; and who, at the same time, recollect the names of the illustrious men, by whom, in more modern times, it has been adopted as an incontrovertible principle. It is sufficient for me to mention those of Berkeley, Hume, Locke, Clarke, and Newton. To the two first of these, it has served as the basis of their sceptical conclusions, which seem indeed to follow from it as necessary consequences; while the others repeatedly refer to it in their reasonings, as one of those facts concerning the mind, of which it would be equally superfluous to attempt a proof or a refutation.

I have enlarged on this part of Dr. Reid's writings the more fully, as he was himself disposed, on all occasions, to rest upon it his chief merit as an author. In proof of this, I shall transcribe a few sentences from a letter of his to Dr. Gregory, dated 20th August, 1790.

"It would be want of candor not to own, that I think there is some merit in what you are pleased to call *my philosophy;* but I think it lies chiefly in having called in question the common theory of *ideas* or *images of things in the mind* being the only objects of thought; a theory founded on natural prejudices, and so universally received as to be interwoven with the structure of language. Yet were I to give you a detail of what led me to call in question this theory, after I had long held it as self-evident and unquestionable, you would think, as I do, that there was much of chance in the matter. The discovery was the birth of time, not of genius; and Berkeley and Hume did more to bring it to light than the man that hit upon it. I think there is hardly any thing that can be called *mine* in the philosophy of the mind, which does not follow with ease from the detection of this prejudice.

"I must, therefore, beg of you most earnestly, to make no contrast in my favor to the disparagement of

my predecessors in the same pursuit. I can truly say of them, and shall always avow, what you are pleased to say of me, that but for the assistance I have received from their writings, I never could have wrote or thought what I have done."

3. Somewhat connected with the last objection, are the censures which have been so frequently bestowed on Dr. Reid, for "an unnecessary and unsystematical multiplication of original or instinctive principles."

In reply to these censures I have little to add to what I have remarked on the same topic, in the Philosophy of the Human Mind. That the fault which is thus ascribed to Dr. Reid has been really committed by some ingenious writers in this part of the island, I most readily allow; nor will I take upon me to assert, that he has, in no instance, fallen into it himself. Such instances, however, will be found, on an accurate examination of his works, to be comparatively few, and to bear a very trifling proportion to those, in which he has most successfully and decisively displayed his acuteness, in exposing the premature and flimsy generalizations of his predecessors.

A certain degree of leaning to that extreme to which Dr. Reid seems to have inclined, was, at the time when he wrote, much safer than the opposite bias. From the earliest ages, the sciences in general, and more particularly the science of the human mind, have been vitiated by an undue love of simplicity; and, in the course of the last century, this disposition, after having been long displayed in subtile theories concerning the Active Powers, or the Principles of Human Conduct, has been directed to similar refinements with respect to the Faculties of the Understanding, and the truths with which they are conversant. Mr. Hume himself has coincided so far with the Hartleian school, as to represent the "principle of union and cohesion among our simple ideas as a kind of *attraction*, of as universal application in the mental world as in the natural;" * and Dr. Hartley, with a still more sanguine imagination, looked for-

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. i. p. 30.

ward to an era, "when future generations shall put all kinds of evidences and inquiries into mathematical forms; reducing Aristotle's ten categories, and bishop Wilkins's forty *summa genera*, to the head of quantity alone, so as to make mathematics and logic, natural history and civil history, natural philosophy and philosophy of all other kinds, coincide *omni ex parte*." *

It is needless to remark the obvious tendency of such premature generalizations to withdraw the attention from the study of particular phenomena; while the effect of Reid's mode of philosophizing, even in those instances where it is carried to an excess, is to detain us, in this preliminary step, a little longer than is absolutely necessary. The truth is, that when the phenomena are once ascertained, generalization is here of comparatively little value, and a task of far less difficulty than to observe facts with precision, and to record them with fairness.

In no part of Dr. Reid's writings, I am inclined to think, could more plausible criticisms be made on this ground, than in his classification of our active principles; but even there, the facts are always placed fully and distinctly before the reader. That several of the benevolent affections which he has stated as ultimate facts in our constitution, might be analyzed into the same general principle differently modified, according to circumstances, there can, in my opinion, be little doubt. This, however, as I have elsewhere observed,† notwithstanding the stress which has been sometimes laid upon it, is chiefly a question of arrangement. Whether we suppose these affections to be all ultimate facts, or some of them to be resolvable into other facts more general; they are equally to be regarded as constituent parts of human nature; and, upon either supposition, we have equal reason to admire the wisdom with which that nature is adapted to the situation in which it is placed. The laws which regulate the acquired perceptions of sight, are surely as much a part of our frame, as those which regulate any of our

* Hartley on Man, p. 207. 4to. edit. Lond. 1791.
† Outlines of Moral Philosophy, pp. 79, 80. 2d. edit. Edin. 1801.

original perceptions; and, although they require, for their developement, a certain degree of experience and observation in the individual, the uniformity of the result shows, that there is nothing arbitrary nor accidental in their origin. In this point of view, what can be more philosophical, as well as beautiful, than the words of Mr. Ferguson, that "natural affection springs up in the soul of the mother, as the milk springs in her breast, to furnish nourishment to her child!" "The effect is here to the race," as the same author has excellently observed, "what the vital motion of the heart is to the individual; too necessary to the preservation of nature's works, to be intrusted to the precarious will or intention of those most nearly concerned." *

The question, indeed, concerning the origin of our different affections, leads to some curious analytical disquisitions; but is of very subordinate importance to those inquiries which relate to their laws, and uses, and mutual references. In many ethical systems, however, it seems to have been considered as the most interesting subject of disquisition which this wonderful part of our frame presents.

In Dr. Reid's Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, and in his Inquiry into the Human Mind, I recollect little that can justly incur a similar censure; notwithstanding the ridicule which Dr. Priestley has attempted to throw on the last of these performances, in his "Table of Reid's Instinctive Principles." † To examine all the articles enumerated in that table, would require a greater latitude of disquisition than the limits of this Memoir allow; and, therefore, I shall confine my observations to a few instances, where the precipitancy of the general criticism seems to me to admit of little dispute. In this light I cannot help considering it, when applied to those dispositions or determinations of the mind, to which Dr. Reid has given the names of the *principle of credulity*, and the *principle of veracity*. How

* Principles of Moral and Political Science, Part I. chap. i. sect. 3. *Of the principles of society in human nature.* The whole discussion unites, in a singular degree, the soundest philosophy with the most eloquent description.

† Examination of Reid's Inquiry, &c. Lond. 1774.

far these titles are happily chosen, is a question of little moment; and on that point I am ready to make every concession. I contend only for what is essentially connected with the objection which has given rise to these remarks.

"That any man," says Dr. Priestley, "should imagine that a peculiar instinctive principle was necessary to explain our giving credit to the relations of others, appears to me, who have been used to see things in a different light, very extraordinary; and yet this doctrine is advanced by Dr. Reid, and adopted by Dr. Beattie. But really," he adds, "what the former says in favor of it, is hardly deserving the slightest notice." *

The passage quoted by Dr. Priestley, in justification of this very peremptory decision, is as follows: "If credulity were the effect of reasoning and experience, it must grow up and gather strength in the same proportion as reason and experience do. But if it is the gift of nature, it will be the strongest in childhood, and limited and restrained by experience; and the most superficial view of human life shows that this last is the case, and not the first."

To my own judgment, this argument of Dr. Reid's, when connected with the excellent illustrations which accompany it, carries complete conviction; and I am confirmed in my opinion by finding that Mr. Smith, a writer inferior to none in acuteness, and strongly disposed by the peculiar bent of his genius, to simplify, as far as possible, the philosophy of human nature, has, in the latest edition of his Theory of Moral Sentiments, acquiesced in this very conclusion; urging in support of it the same reasoning which Dr. Priestley affects to estimate so lightly. "There seems to be in young children an instinctive disposition to believe whatever they are told. Nature seems to have judged it necessary for their preservation, that they should, for some time at least, put implicit confidence in those to whom the care of their childhood, and of the earliest and most necessary part of their education is entrusted. Their

* Examination of Reid's Inquiry, &c. p. 82.

credulity, accordingly, is excessive, and it requires long and much experience of the falsehood of mankind to reduce them to a reasonable degree of diffidence and distrust." * That Mr. Smith's opinion also coincided with Dr. Reid's, in what he has stated concerning the *principle of veracity*, appears evidently from the remarks which immediately follow the passage just quoted. But I must not add to the length of this memoir by unnecessary citations.

Another instinctive principle mentioned by Reid, is "our belief of the continuance of the present course of nature." "All our knowledge of nature," he observes, "beyond our original perceptions, is got by experience, and consists in the interpretation of natural signs. The appearance of the sign is followed by the belief of the thing signified. Upon this principle of our constitution, not only acquired perception, but also inductive reasoning, and all reasoning from analogy, is grounded; and, therefore, for want of a better name, we shall beg leave to call it the *inductive principle*. It is from the force of this principle that we immediately assent to that axiom, upon which all our knowledge of nature is built, that effects of the same kind must have the same cause. Take away the light of this inductive principle, and experience is as blind as a mole. She may indeed feel what is present, and what immediately touches her, but she sees nothing that is either before or behind, upon the right hand or upon the left, future or past."

On this doctrine, likewise, the same critic has expressed himself with much severity; calling it "a mere quibble;" and adding, "Every step that I take among this writer's sophisms, raises my astonishment higher than before." In this, however, as in many other instances, he has been led to censure Dr. Reid, not because he was able to see farther than his antagonist, but because he did not see quite so far. Turgot, in an article inserted in the French Encyclopédie, and Condorcet, in a discourse prefixed to one of his mathematical publications,† have, both of them, stated the fact with

* Smith's Theory, last edit. Part. VII. sect. 4.

† Essai sur l'Application de l'Analyse à la Probabilité des Décisions rendues à la Pluralité des Voix. Paris, 1785.

a true philosophical precision; and after doing so, have deduced from it an inference, not only the same in substance with that of Dr. Reid, but almost expressed in the same form of words.

In these references, as well as in that already made to Mr. Smith's Theory, I would not be understood to lay any undue stress on authority, in a philosophical argument. I wish only, by contrasting the modesty and caution resulting from habits of profound thought, with that theoretical intrepidity which a blindness to insuperable difficulties has a tendency to inspire, to invite those whose prejudices against this part of Reid's system rest chiefly on the great names to which they conceive it to be hostile, to re-examine it with a little more attention, before they pronounce finally on its merits.

The prejudices which are apt to occur against a mode of philosophizing, so mortifying to scholastic arrogance, are encouraged greatly by that natural disposition, to refer particular facts to general laws, which is the foundation of all scientific arrangement; a principle of the utmost importance to our intellectual constitution, but which requires the guidance of a sound and experienced understanding to accomplish the purposes for which it was destined. They are encouraged also, in no inconsiderable degree, by the acknowledged success of mathematicians, in raising, on the basis of a few simple *data*, the most magnificent, and at the same time the most solid, fabric of science, of which human genius can boast. The absurd references which logicians are accustomed to make to Euclid's Elements of Geometry, as a model which cannot be too studiously copied, both in physics and in morals, have contributed, in this as in a variety of other instances, to mislead philosophers from the study of facts into the false refinements of hypothetical theory.

On these misapplications of mathematical method to sciences which rest ultimately on experiment and observation, I shall take another opportunity of offering some strictures. At present, it is sufficient to remark the peculiar nature of the truths about which pure or

abstract mathematics are conversant. As these truths have all a necessary connexion with each other, all of them resting ultimately on those definitions or hypotheses which are the principles of our reasoning, the beauty of the science cannot fail to increase in proportion to the simplicity of the *data*, compared with the incalculable variety of consequences which they involve: and to the simplifications and generalizations of theory on such a subject, it is perhaps impossible to conceive any limit. How different is the case in those inquiries, where our first principles are not *definitions* but *facts;* and where our business is not to trace necessary connexions, but the laws which regulate the established order of the universe!

In various attempts which have been lately made, more especially on the continent, toward a systematical exposition of the elements of physics, the effects of the mistake I am now censuring are extremely remarkable. The happy use of mathematical principles exhibited in the writings of Newton and his followers, having rendered an extensive knowledge of them an indispensable preparation for the study of the mechanical philosophy, the early habits of thought acquired in the former pursuit are naturally transferred to the latter. Hence the illogical and obscure manner in which its elementary principles have frequently been stated; an attempt being made to deduce from the smallest possible number of *data*, the whole system of truths which it comprehends. The analogy existing among some of the fundamental laws of mechanics, bestows, in the opinion of the multitude, an appearance of plausibility on such attempts; and their obvious tendency is to withdraw the attention from that unity of design, which it is the noblest employment of philosophy to illustrate, by disguising it under the semblance of an eternal and necessary order, similar to what the mathematician delights to trace among the mutual relations of quantities and figures.

These slight hints may serve as a reply in part to what Dr. Priestley has suggested with respect to the consequences likely to follow, if the spirit of Reid's

philosophy should be introduced into physics.* One consequence would unquestionably be, a careful separation between the principles which we learn from experience alone, and those which are fairly resolvable, by mathematical or physical reasoning, into other facts still more general; and, of course, a correction of that false logic, which, while it throws an air of mystery over the plainest and most undeniable facts, levels the study of nature, in point of moral interest, with the investigations of the geometer or of the algebraist.

It must not, however, be supposed, that, in the present state of natural philosophy, a false logic threatens the same dangerous effects as in the philosophy of the mind. It may retard somewhat the progress of the student at his first outset; or it may confound, in his apprehensions, the harmony of systematical order, with the consistency and mutual dependency essential to a series of mathematical theorems: but the fundamental truths of physics are now too well established, and the checks which it furnishes against sophistry are too numerous and palpable, to admit the possibility of any permanent error in our deductions. In the philosophy of the mind, so difficult is the acquisition of those habits of reflection which can alone lead to a correct knowledge of the intellectual *phenomena*, that a faulty hypothesis, if skilfully fortified by the imposing, though illusory strength of arbitrary definitions and a systematical phraseology, may maintain its ground for a succession of ages.

It will not, I trust, be inferred from any thing I have here advanced, that I mean to offer an apology for those, who, either in physics or morals, would presumptuously state their own opinions with respect to the laws of nature, as a bar against future attempts to simplify and generalize them still farther. To assert, that none of the mechanical explanations yet given of gravitation are satisfactory; and even to hint, that ingenuity might be more profitably employed than in the search of such a theory, is something different from a gratuitous assump-

* Examination of Reid's Inquiry, p. 110.

tion of ultimate facts in physics; nor does it imply an obstinate determination to resist legitimate evidence, should some fortunate inquirer, contrary to what seems probable at present, succeed where the genius of Newton has failed. If Dr. Reid has gone farther than this in his conclusions concerning the principles which he calls original or instinctive, he has departed from that guarded language in which he commonly expresses himself; for all that it was of importance for him to conclude was, that the theories of his predecessors were, in these instances, exceptionable; and the doubts he may occasionally insinuate, concerning the success of future adventurers, so far from betraying any overweening confidence in his own understanding, are an indirect tribute to the talents of those, from whose failure he draws an argument against the possibility of their undertaking.

The same eagerness to simplify and to generalize, which led Priestley to complain of the number of Reid's instinctive principles, has carried some later philosophers a step farther. According to them, the very word *instinct* is unphilosophical; and every thing either in man or brute, which has been hitherto referred to this mysterious source, may be easily accounted for by experience or imitation. A few instances in which this doctrine appears to have been successfully verified, have been deemed sufficient to establish it without any limitation.

In a very original work, on which I have already hazarded some criticisms, much ingenuity has been employed in analyzing the wonderful effects which the human infant is enabled to make for its own preservation, the moment after its introduction to the light. Thus, it is observed, that the *fœtus*, while still in the *uterus*, learns to perform the operation of swallowing; and also learns to relieve itself, by a change of posture, from the irksomeness of continued rest: and, therefore, if we admit these propositions, we must conclude, that some of the actions which infants are vulgarly supposed to perform in consequence of instincts coëval with birth, are only a continuation of actions to which they were determined at an earlier period of their being. The re-

mark is ingenious, and it may perhaps be just; but it does not prove that *instinct* is an unphilosophical term; nor does it render the operations of the infant less mysterious than they seem to be on the common supposition. How far soever the analysis, in such instances, may be carried, we must at last arrive at some *phenomenon* no less wonderful than that which we mean to explain: in other words, we must still admit as an ultimate fact, the existence of an original determination to a particular mode of action salutary or necessary to the animal; and all we have accomplished is to connect the origin of this instinct with an earlier period in the history of the human mind.

The same author has attempted to account, in a manner somewhat similar, for the different degrees in which the young of different animals are able, at the moment of birth, to exert their bodily powers. Thus, calves and chickens are able to walk almost immediately; while the human infant, even in the most favorable situations, is six or even twelve months old before he can stand alone. For this, Dr. Darwin assigns two causes. 1. That the young of some animals come into the world in a more complete state than that of others: the colt and lamb, for example, enjoying, in this respect, a striking advantage over the puppy and the rabbit. 2. That the mode of walking of some animals, coincides more perfectly than that of others, with the previous motions of the *fœtus in utero*. The struggles of all animals, he observes, in the womb, must resemble their manner of swimming, as by this kind of motion, they can best change their attitude in water. But the swimming of the calf and of the chicken resembles their ordinary movements on the ground, which they have thus learned in part to execute, while concealed from our observation; whereas, the swimming of the human infant differing totally from his manner of walking, he has no opportunity of acquiring the last of these arts till he is exposed to our view. The theory is extremely plausible, and does honor to the author's sagacity; but it only places in a new light that provident care which nature has taken of all her offspring in the infancy of their existence.

Another instance may contribute toward a more ample illustration of the same subject. A lamb, not many minutes after it is dropped, proceeds to search for its nourishment in that spot where alone it is to be found; applying both its limbs and its eyes to their respective offices. The peasant observes the fact, and gives the name of *instinct*, or some corresponding term, to the unknown principle by which the animal is guided. On a more accurate examination of circumstances, the philosopher finds reason to conclude, that it is by the sense of smelling, it is thus directed to its object. In proof of this, among other curious facts, the following has been quoted. "On dissecting," says Galen, "a goat great with young, I found a brisk *embryon*, and having detached it from the *matrix*, and snatching it away before it saw its dam, I brought it into a room where there were many vessels; some filled with wine, others with oil, some with honey, others with milk, or some other liquor; and in others there were grains and fruits. We first observed the young animal get upon its feet and walk; then it shook itself, and afterward scratched its side with one of its feet: then we saw it smelling to every one of those things that were set in the room; and when it had smelt to them all, it drank up the milk." * Admitting this very beautiful story to be true, and, for my own part, I am far from being disposed to question its probability, it only enables us to state the fact with a little more precision in consequence of our having ascertained, that it is to the sense of smelling, the instinctive determination is attached. The conclusion of the peasant is not here at variance with that of the philosopher. It differs only in this, that he expresses himself in those general terms which are suited to his ignorance of the particular process by which nature in this case accomplishes her end; and if he did otherwise, he would be censurable for pre-judging a question of which he is incompetent to form an accurate opinion.

The application of these illustrations to some of Dr. Reid's conclusions concerning the instinctive principles

* Darwin, vol. i. pp. 195, 196.

of the human mind, is, I flatter myself, sufficiently manifest. They relate, indeed, to a subject which differs, in various respects, from that which has fallen under his more particular consideration; but the same rules of philosophizing will be found to apply equally to both.

4. To examine in detail the criticisms which have been made on what Dr. Reid has written concerning the principles of common sense, an article of his philosophy which has been supposed "to sanction an appeal from the decisions of the learned to the voice of the multitude," would lead me into discussions inconsistent with the limits of this memoir: not that the importance of these criticisms demands a long or elaborate refutation; but because the subject, according to the view I wish to take of it, involves some other questions of great moment and difficulty, relative to the foundations of human knowledge. Dr. Priestley, the most formidable of Dr. Reid's opponents, has granted as much in favor of this doctrine as it is worth while to contend for, on the present occasion. "Had these writers," he observes with respect to Dr. Reid and his followers, "assumed, as the elements of their common sense, certain truths which are so plain that no man could doubt of them, without entering into the ground of our assent to them, their conduct would have been liable to very little objection. All that could have been said would have been, that, without any necessity, they had made an innovation in the received use of a term. For no person ever denied, that there *are* self-evident truths, and that these must be assumed as the foundation of all our reasoning. I never met with any person who did not acknowledge this, or heard of any argumentative treatise that did not go upon the supposition of it." * After such an acknowledgment, it is impossible to forbear asking, with Dr. Campbell, "What is the great point which Dr. Priestley would controvert? Is it, whether such self-evident truths shall be denominated principles of common sense, or be distinguished by some other appellation?" †

* Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry, &c. p. 119.
† Philosophy of Rhetoric, Vol. i. p. 111. See note (E.)

That the doctrine in question has been, in some publications, presented in a very exceptionable form, I most readily allow; nor would I be understood to subscribe to it implicitly, even as it appears in the works of Dr. Reid. It is but an act of justice to him, however, to request, that his opinions may be judged of from his own works alone, not from those of others who may have happened to coincide with him in certain tenets, or in certain modes of expression; and that, before any ridicule be attempted on his conclusions concerning the authority of common sense, his antagonists would take the trouble to examine in what acceptation he has employed that phrase.

The truths which Dr. Reid seems, in most instances, disposed to refer to the judgment of this tribunal, might, in my opinion, be denominated more unexceptionably, "fundamental laws of human belief." They have been called by a very ingenious foreigner, M. Trembley of Geneva, but certainly with a singular infelicity of language, *Préjugés Légitimes.* Of this kind are the following propositions; "I am the same person to-day that I was yesterday;" "The material world has an existence independent of that of percipient beings;" "There are other intelligent beings in the universe besides myself;" "The future course of nature will resemble the past." Such truths no man but a philosopher ever thinks of stating to himself in words; but all our conduct and all our reasonings proceed on the supposition that they are admitted. The belief of them is essential for the preservation of our animal existence; and it is accordingly coëval with the first operations of the intellect.

One of the first writers who introduced the phrase *common sense* into the technical or appropriate language of logic, was father Buffier, in a book entiled Traité des Premières Vérités. It has since been adopted by several authors of note in this country; particularly by Dr. Reid, Dr. Oswald and Dr. Beattie; by all of whom, however, I am afraid it must be confessed, it has been occasionally employed without a due attention to precision. The last of these writers uses it * to denote that

* Essay on Truth, edition second, p. 40 *et seq.* also p. 166 *et seq.*

power by which the mind perceives the truth of any intuitive proposition; whether it be an axiom of abstract science; or a statement of some fact resting on the immediate information of consciousness, of perception, or of memory; or one of those fundamental laws of belief which are implied in the application of our faculties to the ordinary business of life. The same extensive use of the word may, I believe, be found in the other authors just mentioned. But no authority can justify such a laxity in the employment of language in philosophical discussions; for, if mathematical axioms be, as they are manifestly and indisputably, a class of propositions essentially distinct from the other kinds of intuitive truths now described, why refer them all indiscriminately to the same principle in our constitution? If this phrase, therefore, be at all retained, precision requires, that it should be employed in a more limited acceptation; and accordingly, in the works under our consideration, it is appropriated most frequently, though by no means uniformly, to that class of intuitive truths which I have already called "fundamental laws of belief." * When thus restricted, it conveys a notion, unambiguous at least, and definite; and, consequently, the question about its propriety or impropriety turns entirely on the coincidence of this definition with the meaning of the word as employed in ordinary discourse. Whatever objections, therefore, may be stated to the expression as now defined, will apply to it with additional force, when used with the latitude which has been already censured.

I have said, that the question about the propriety of the phrase *common sense* as employed by philosophers, must be decided by an appeal to general practice: for, although it be allowable and even necessary for a philosopher, to limit the acceptation of words which are employed vaguely in common discourse, it is always dangerous to give to a word a scientific meaning essentially distinct from that in which it is usually understood. It has, at least, the effect of misleading those who do

* This seems to be nearly the meaning annexed to the phrase, by the learned and acute author of the Philosophy of Rhetoric, vol. i. p. 109 *et seq.*

not enter deeply into the subject; and of giving a paradoxical appearance to doctrines, which, if expressed in more unexceptionable terms, would be readily admitted.

It appears to me, that this has actually happened in the present instance. The phrase *common sense*, as it is generally understood, is nearly synonymous with *mother-wit;* denoting that degree of sagacity, depending partly on original capacity, and partly on personal experience and observation, which qualifies an individual for those simple and essential occupations which all men are called on to exercise habitually by their common nature. In this acceptation, it is opposed to those mental acquirements which are derived from a regular education and from the study of books; and refers, not to the speculative convictions of the understanding, but to that prudence and discretion which are the foundation of successful conduct. Such is the idea which Pope annexes to the word, when, speaking of good sense, which means only a more than ordinary share of common sense, he calls it

> "the gift of heaven,
> And though no science, fairly worth the seven."

To speak, accordingly, of appealing from the conclusions of philosophy to common sense, had the appearance to title-page readers, of appealing from the verdict of the learned to the voice of the multitude; or of attempting to silence free discussion, by a reference to some arbitrary and undefinable standard, distinct from any of the intellectual powers, hitherto enumerated by logicians. Whatever countenance may be supposed to have been given by some writers to such an interpretation of this mode of expression, I may venture to assert that none is afforded by the works of Dr. Reid. The standard to which he appeals, is neither the creed of a particular sect, nor the inward light of enthusiastic presumption; but that constitution of human nature without which all the business of the world would immediately cease; and the substance of his doctrine amounts merely to this, that those essential laws of be-

lief, to which sceptics have objected when considered in connexion with our scientific reasonings, are implied in every step we take as active beings; and if called in question by any man in his practical concerns, would expose him universally to the charge of insanity.

In stating this important argument, it were perhaps to be wished, that the subject had been treated with somewhat more of analytical accuracy; and it is certainly to be regretted, that a phrase should have been employed, so well calculated by its ambiguity to furnish a convenient handle to misrepresentations; but in the judgment of those who have perused Dr. Reid's writings with an intelligent and candid attention, these misrepresentations must recoil on their authors; while they who are really interested in the progress of useful science, will be disposed rather to lend their aid in supplying what is defective in his views, than to reject hastily a doctrine which aims, by the developement of some logical principles, overlooked in the absurd systems which have been borrowed from the schools, to vindicate the authority of truths intimately and extensively connected with human happiness.

In the prosecution of my own speculations on the human mind, I shall have occasion to explain myself fully, concerning this as well as various other questions connected with the foundations of philosophical evidence. The new doctrines, and new phraseology on that subject, which have lately become fashionable among some metaphysicians in Germany, and which, in my opinion, have contributed not a little to involve it in additional obscurity, are a sufficient proof, that this essential and fundamental article of logic is not as yet completely exhausted.

In order to bring the foregoing remarks within some compass, I have found it necessary to confine myself to such objections as strike at the root of Dr. Reid's philosophy, without touching on any of his opinions or particular topics, however important. I have been obliged also to compress what I have stated, within narrower limits than were perhaps consistent with complete per-

spicuity; and to reject many illustrations which crowded upon me, at almost every step of my progress.

It may not, perhaps, be superfluous to add, that, supposing some of these objections to possess more force than I have ascribed to them in my reply, it will not therefore follow, that little advantage is to be derived from a careful perusal of the speculations against which they are directed. Even they who dissent the most widely from Dr. Reid's conclusions, can scarcely fail to admit, that as a writer he exhibits a striking contrast to the most successful of his predecessors, in a logical precision and simplicity of language; his statement of facts being neither vitiated by physiological hypothesis, nor obscured by scholastic mystery. Whoever has reflected on the infinite importance, in such inquiries, of a skilful use of words as the essential instrument of thought, must be aware of the influence which his works are likely to have on the future progress of science; were they to produce no other effect than a general imitation of his mode of reasoning, and of his guarded phraseology.

It is not indeed every reader to whom these inquiries are accessible; for habits of attention in general, and still more habits of attention to the *phenomena* of thought, require early and careful cultivation: but those who are capable of the exertion, will soon recognise, in Dr. Reid's statements, the faithful history of their own minds, and will find their labors amply rewarded by that satisfaction which always accompanies the discovery of useful truth. They may expect, also, to be rewarded by some intellectual acquisitions not altogether useless in their other studies. An author well qualified to judge, from his own experience, of whatever conduces to invigorate or to embellish the understanding, has beautifully remarked, that "by turning the soul inward on itself, its forces are concentred, and are fitted for stronger and bolder flights of science; and that, in such pursuits, whether we take or whether we lose the game, the chase is certainly of service." * In this respect, the

* Preface to Mr. Burke's Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful.

philosophy of the mind, abstracting entirely from that pre-eminence which belongs to it in consequence of its practical applications, may claim a distinguished rank among those preparatory disciplines, which another writer of equal talents has happily compared to "the crops which are raised, not for the sake of the harvest, but to be ploughed in as a dressing to the land." *

SECTION III.

Conclusion of the Narrative.

The three works to which the foregoing remarks refer, together with the Essay on Quantity, published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, and a short but masterly Analysis of Aristotle's Logic, which forms an appendix to the third volume of Lord Kaimes's Sketches, comprehend the whole of Dr. Reid's publications. The interval between the dates of the first and last of these amounts to no less than forty years, although he had attained to the age of thirty-eight before he ventured to appear as an author.

With the Essays on the Active Powers of Man, he closed his literary career; but he continued, notwithstanding, to prosecute his studies with unabated ardor and activity. The more modern improvements in chemistry attracted his particular notice; and he applied himself, with his wonted diligence and success, to the study of its new theories and new nomenclature. He amused himself also, at times, in preparing for a philosophical society, of which he was a member, short essays on particular topics, which happened to interest his curiosity, and on which he thought he might derive useful hints from friendly discussion. The most important of these were, An Examination of Priestley's Opinions concerning Matter and Mind; Observations on the Utopia of

* Bishop Berkeley's Querist.

Sir Thomas More; and Physiological Reflections on Muscular Motion. This last essay appears to have been written in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and was read by the author to his associates, a few months before his death. "His thoughts were led to the speculations it contains," as he himself mentions in the conclusion, "by the experience of some of the effects which old age produces on the muscular motions." "As they were occasioned, therefore," he adds, "by the infirmities of age, they will, I hope be heard with the greater indulgence."

Among the various occupations with which he thus enlivened his retirement, the mathematical pursuits of his earlier years held a distinguished place. He delighted to converse about them with his friends; and often exercised his skill in the investigation of particular problems. His knowledge of ancient geometry had not probably been, at any time, very extensive; but he had cultivated diligently those parts of mathematical science which are subservient to the study of Sir Isaac Newton's Works. He had a predilection, more particularly, for researches requiring the aid of arithmetical calculation, in the practice of which he possessed uncommon expertness and address. I think, I have sometimes observed in him a slight and amiable vanity connected with this accomplishment.

The revival, at this period of Dr. Reid's life, of his first scientific propensity, has often recalled to me a remark of Mr. Smith's, that of all the amusements of old age, the most grateful and soothing is a renewal of acquaintance with the favorite studies, and favorite authors of our youth; a remark which, in his own case, seemed to be more particularly exemplified, while he was re-perusing, with the enthusiasm of a student, the tragic poets of ancient Greece. I heard him at least, repeat the observation more than once, while Sophocles or Euripides lay open on his table.

In the case of Dr. Reid, other motives, perhaps, conspired with the influence of the agreeable associations, to which Mr. Smith probably alluded. His attention was always fixed on the state of his intellectual faculties; and

for counteracting the effects of time on these, mathematical studies seem to be fitted in a peculiar degree. They are fortunately, too, within the reach of many individuals, after a decay of memory disqualifies them for inquiries which involve a multiplicity of details. Such detached problems, more especially, as Dr. Reid commonly selected for his consideration; problems where all the *data* are brought at once under the eye, and where a connected train of thinking is not to be carried on from day to day; will be found, as I have witnessed with pleasure in several instances, by those who are capable of such a recreation, a valuable addition to the scanty resources of a life protracted beyond the ordinary limit.

While he was thus enjoying an old age, happy in some respects beyond the usual lot of humanity, his domestic comfort suffered a deep and incurable wound by the death of Mrs. Reid. He had had the misfortune, too, of surviving, for many years, a numerous family of promising children; four of whom, two sons and two daughters, died after they attained to maturity. One daughter only was left to him when he lost his wife; and of her affectionate good offices he could not always avail himself, in consequence of the attentions which her own husband's infirmities required. Of this lady, who is still alive, the widow of Patrick Carmichael, M. D.,* I shall have occasion again to introduce the name, before I conclude this narrative.

A short extract from a letter addressed to myself by Dr. Reid, not many weeks after his wife's death, will, I am persuaded, be acceptable to many, as an interesting relic of the writer.

"By the loss of my bosom-friend, with whom I lived fifty-two years, I am brought into a kind of new world, at a time of life when old habits are not easily forgot, or new ones acquired. But every world is God's world, and I am thankful for the comforts he has left me. Mrs.

* A learned and worthy physician, who, after a long residence in Holland, where he practised medicine, retired to Glasgow. He was a younger son of Professor Gerschom Carmichael, who published about the year 1720, an edition of Puffendorf, De Officio Hominis et Civis, and who is pronounced by Dr. Hutcheson, "by far the best commentator on that book."

Carmichael has now the care of two old deaf men, and does every thing in her power to please them; and both are very sensible of her goodness. I have more health than at my time of life I had any reason to expect. I walk about; entertain myself with reading what I soon forget; can converse with one person, if he articulates distinctly, and is within ten inches of my left ear; go to church without hearing one word of what is said. You know, I never had any pretensions to vivacity, but I am still free from languor and *ennui.*

"If you are weary of this detail, impute it to the anxiety you express to know the state of my health. I wish you may have no more uneasiness at my age; being yours most affectionately."

About four years after this event, he was prevailed on by his friend and relation, Dr. Gregory, to pass a few weeks, during the summer of 1796, at Edinburgh. He was accompanied by Mrs. Carmichael, who lived with him in Dr. Gregory's house; a situation which united, under the same roof, every advantage of medical care, of tender attachment, and of philosophical intercourse. As Dr. Gregory's professional engagements, however, necessarily interfered much with his attentions to his guest, I enjoyed more of Dr. Reid's society, than might otherwise have fallen to my share. I had the pleasure, accordingly, of spending some hours with him daily, and of attending him in his walking excursions, which frequently extended to the distance of three or four miles. His faculties, excepting his memory which was considerably impaired, appeared as vigorous as ever; and, although his deafness prevented him from taking any share in general conversation, he was still able to enjoy the company of a friend. Mr. Playfair and myself were both witnesses of the acuteness which he displayed on one occasion, in detecting a mistake, by no means obvious, in a manuscript of his kinsman David Gregory, on the subject of Prime and Ultimate Ratios. Nor had his temper suffered from the hand of time, either in point of gentleness or of gayety. "Instead of repining at the enjoyments of the young, he delighted in promoting them; and, after all the losses he had sustained in his own

family, he continued to treat children with such condescension and benignity, that some very young ones noticed the peculiar kindness of his eye." * In apparent soundness and activity of body, he resembled more a man of sixty than of eighty-seven.

He returned to Glasgow in his usual health and spirits; and continued, for some weeks, to devote, as formerly, a regular portion of his time to the exercise both of body and of mind. It appears, from a letter of Dr. Cleghorn's to Dr. Gregory, that he was still able to work with his own hands in his garden; and he was found by Dr. Brown, occupied in the solution of an algebraical problem of considerable difficulty, in which, after the labor of a day or two, he at last succeeded. It was in the course of the same short interval, that he committed to writing those particulars concerning his ancestors, which I have already mentioned.

This active and useful life was now, however, drawing to a conclusion. A violent disorder attacked him about the end of September; but does not seem to have occasioned much alarm to those about him, till he was visited by Dr. Cleghorn, who soon after communicated his apprehensions in a letter to Dr. Gregory. Among other symptoms, he mentioned particularly, "that alteration of voice and features, which, though not easily described, is so well known to all who have opportunities of seeing life close." Dr. Reid's own opinion of his case was probably the same with that of his physician; as he expressed to him on his first visit, his hope that he was "soon to get his dismission." After a severe struggle, attended with repeated strokes of palsy, he died on the 7th of October following. Dr. Gregory had the melancholy satisfaction of visiting his venerable friend on his death-bed, and of paying him this unavailing mark of attachment, before his powers of recollection were entirely gone.

The only surviving descendant of Dr. Reid is Mrs.

* I have borrowed this sentence from a just and elegant character of Dr. Reid, which appeared a few days after his death, in one of the Glasgow Journals. I had occasion frequently to verify the truth of the observation during his last visit to Edinburgh.

Carmichael, a daughter worthy in every respect of such a father: long the chief comfort and support of his old age, and his anxious nurse in his last moments.*

In point of bodily constitution, few men have been more indebted to nature than Dr. Reid. His form was vigorous and athletic; and his muscular force, though he was somewhat under the middle size, uncommonly great; advantages to which his habits of temperance and exercise, and the unclouded serenity of his temper, did ample justice. His countenance was strongly expressive of deep and collected thought; but when brightened up by the face of a friend, what chiefly caught the attention was, a look of good will and of kindness. A picture of him, for which he consented, at the particular request of Dr. Gregory, to sit to Mr. Raeburn, during his last visit to Edinburgh, is generally and justly ranked among the happiest performances of that excellent artist. The medallion of Tassie, also, for which he sat in the eighty-first year of his age, presents a very perfect resemblance.

I have little to add to what the foregoing pages contain with respect to his character. Its most prominent features were, intrepid and inflexible rectitude; a pure and devoted attachment to truth; and an entire command, acquired by the unwearied exertions of a long life, over all his passions. Hence, in those parts of his writings where his subject forces him to dispute the conclusions of others, a scrupulous rejection of every expression calculated to irritate those whom he was anxious to convince; and a spirit of liberality and good humor toward his opponents, from which no asperity on their part could provoke him for a moment to deviate. The progress of useful knowledge, more especially in what relates to human nature and to human life, he believed to be retarded rather than advanced by the intemperance of controversy; and to be secured most effectually when intrusted to the slow but irresistible influence of sober reasoning. That the argumentative talents of the disputants might be improved by such altercations, he was willing to allow; but, considered

* Note (F.)

in their connexion with the great objects which all classes of writers profess equally to have in view, he was convinced "that they have done more harm to the practice, than they have done service to the theory of morality." *

In private life, no man ever maintained, more eminently or more uniformly, the dignity of philosophy; combining with the most amiable modesty and gentleness, the noblest spirit of independence. The only preferments which he ever enjoyed, he owed to the unsolicited favor of the two learned bodies who successively adopted him into their number; and the respectable rank which he supported in society, was the well earned reward of his own academical labors. The studies in which he delighted, were little calculated to draw on him the patronage of the great; and he was unskilled in the art of courting advancement, by "fashioning his doctrines to the varying hour."

As a philosopher, his genius was more peculiarly characterized by a sound, cautious, distinguishing judgment; by a singular patience and perseverance of thought; and by habits of the most fixed and concentrated attention to his own mental operations; endowments which, although not the most splendid in the estimation of the multitude, would seem entitled, from the history of science, to rank among the rarest gifts of the mind.

With these habits and powers, he united, what does not always accompany them, the curiosity of a naturalist, and the eye of an observer; and accordingly, his information about every thing relating to physical science, and to the useful arts, was extensive and accurate. His memory for historical details was not so remarkable; and he used sometimes to regret the imperfect degree in which he possessed this faculty. I am inclined, however to think, that in doing so, he underrated his natural advantages; estimating the strength of memory, as men commonly do, rather by the recollection of particular facts, than by the possession of those

* Preface to Pope's Essay on Man.

general conclusions, from a subserviency to which, such facts derive their principal value.

Toward the close of life, indeed, his memory was much less vigorous than the other powers of his intellect; in none of which, could I ever perceive any symptom of decline. His ardor for knowledge, too, remained unextinguished to the last; and, when cherished by the society of the young and inquisitive, seemed even to increase with his years. What is still more remarkable, he retained in extreme old age all the sympathetic tenderness, and all the moral sensibility of youth; the liveliness of his emotions, wherever the happiness of others was concerned, forming an affecting contrast to his own unconquerable firmness under the severest trials.

Nor was the sensibility which he retained, the selfish and sterile offspring of taste and indolence. It was alive and active, wherever he could command the means of relieving the distresses or of adding to the comforts of others; and was often felt in its effects, where he was unseen and unknown. Among the various proofs of this, which have happened to fall under my own knowledge, I cannot help mentioning particularly, upon the most unquestionable authority, the secrecy with which he conveyed his occasional benefactions to his former parishioners at New Machar, long after his establishment at Glasgow. One donation, in particular, during the scarcity of 1782, a donation which, notwithstanding all his precautions, was distinctly traced to his beneficence, might perhaps have been thought disproportionate to his limited income, had not his own simple and moderate habits multiplied the resources of his humanity.

His opinions on the most important subjects are to be found in his works; and that spirit of piety which animated every part of his conduct, forms the best comment on their practical tendency. In the state in which he found the philosophical world, he believed, that his talents could not be so usefully employed, as in combating the schemes of those who aimed at the complete subversion of religion, both natural and revealed; convinc-

ed with Dr. Clarke, that, "as Christianity presupposes the truth of natural religion, whatever tends to discredit the latter, must have a proportionally greater effect in weakening the authority of the former." * In his views of both he seems to have coincided nearly with Bishop Butler; an author whom he held in the highest estimation. A very careful abstract of the treatise entitled Analogy, drawn up by Dr. Reid, many years ago, for his own use, still exists among his manuscripts; and the short Dissertation on Virtue which Butler has annexed to that work, together with the Discourses on Human Nature published in his volume of Sermons, he used always to recommend as the most satisfactory account that has yet appeared of the fundamental principles of morals: nor could he conceal his regret, that the profound philosophy which these discourses contain, should of late have been so generally supplanted in England, by the speculations of some other moralists, who, while they profess to idolize the memory of Locke, "approve little or nothing in his writings, but his errors." †

Deeply impressed, however, as he was with his own principles, he possessed the most perfect liberality toward all whom he believed to be honestly and conscientiously devoted to the search of truth. With one very distinguished character, the late lord Kaimes, he lived in the most cordial and affectionate friendship, notwithstanding the avowed opposition of their sentiments on some moral questions, to which he attached the greatest importance. Both of them, however, were the friends of virtue and of mankind; and both were able to temper the warmth of free discussion, with the forbearance and good humor founded on reciprocal esteem. No two men, certainly, ever exhibited a more striking contrast in their conversation, or in their constitutional tempers: the one, slow and cautious in his decisions, even on those topics which he had most diligently studied; reserved and silent in promiscuous society; and

* Collection of Papers which passed between Leibnitz and Clarke. See Dr. Clarke's Dedication.

† I have adopted here the words which Dr. Clarke applied to some of Mr. Locke's earlier followers. They are still more applicable to many writers of the present times. See Clarke's first Reply to Leibnitz.

retaining, after all his literary eminence, the same simple and unassuming manners which he brought from his country residence: the other, lively, rapid, and communicative; accustomed, by his professional pursuits, to wield with address the weapons of controversy, and not averse to a trial of his powers on questions the most foreign to his ordinary habits of inquiry. But these characteristical differences, while to their common friends they lent an additional charm to the distinguishing merits of each, served only to enliven their social intercourse, and to cement their mutual attachment.

I recollect few, if any anecdotes, of Dr. Reid, which appear to me calculated to throw additional light on his character; and I suspect strongly, that many of those which are to be met with in biographical publications, are more likely to mislead, than to inform. A trifling incident, it is true, may sometimes paint a peculiar feature better than the most elaborate description; but a selection of incidents really characteristical, presupposes, in the observer, a rare capacity to discriminate and to generalize; and where this capacity is wanting, a biographer, with the most scrupulous attention to the veracity of his details, may yet convey a very false conception of the individual he would describe. As, in the present instance, my subject afforded no materials for such a choice, I have attempted, to the best of my abilities, instead of retailing detached fragments of conversations, or recording insulated and unmeaning occurrences, to communicate to others the general impressions which Dr. Reid's character has left on my mind. In this attempt, I am far from being confident I have succeeded; but, how barren soever I may have thus rendered my pages in the estimation of those who consider biography merely in the light of an amusing tale, I have, at least, the satisfaction to think, that my picture, though faint in the coloring, does not present a distorted resemblance of the original.

The confidential correspondence of an individual with his friends, affords to the student of human nature, materials of far greater authenticity and importance; more particularly, the correspondence of a man like Dr. Reid,

who will not be suspected by those who knew him, of accommodating his letters, as has been alleged of Cicero, to the humors and principles of those whom he addressed. I am far, at the same time, from thinking, that the correspondence of Dr. Reid would be generally interesting; or even that he excelled in this species of writing: but few men, I sincerely believe, who have written so much, have left behind them such unblemished memorials of their virtue.

At present, I shall only transcribe two letters, which I select from a considerable number now lying before me, as they seem to accord, more than the others, with the general design of this memoir. The first, which is dated January 13, 1779, is addressed to the Rev. William Gregory, now rector of St. Andrew's, Canterbury, then an undergraduate in Baliol college, Oxford. It relates to a remarkable peculiarity in Dr. Reid's physical temperament, connected with the subject of dreaming; and is farther interesting as a genuine record of some particulars in his early habits, in which it is easy to perceive the openings of a superior mind.

"The fact which your brother the Doctor desires to be informed of, was as you mention it. As far as I remember the circumstances, they are as follow:

"About the age of fourteen, I was, almost every night, unhappy in my sleep from frightful dreams. Sometimes hanging over a dreadful precipice, and just ready to drop down; sometimes pursued for my life, and stopped by a wall, or by a sudden loss of all strength; sometimes ready to be devoured by a wild beast. How long I was plagued with such dreams, I do not now recollect. I believe it was for a year or two at least; and I think they had quite left me before I was fifteen. In those days, I was much given to what Mr. Addison, in one of his Spectators, calls *castle-building;* and in my evening solitary walk, which was generally all the exercise I took, my thoughts would hurry me into some active scene, where I generally acquitted myself much to my own satisfaction; and in these scenes of imagination I performed many a gallant exploit. At the same time, in my dreams I found myself

the most arrant coward that ever was. Not only my courage, but my strength, failed me in every danger; and I often rose from my bed in the morning in such a panic, that it took some time to get the better of it. I wished very much to get free of these uneasy dreams, which not only made me unhappy in sleep, but often left a disagreeable impression in my mind for some part of the following day. I thought it was worth trying, whether it was possible to recollect that it was all a dream, and that I was in no real danger. I often went to sleep with my mind as strongly impressed as I could with this thought, that I never in my life time was in any real danger, and that every fright I had was a dream. After many fruitless endeavours to recollect this when the danger appeared, I effected it at last, and have often, when I was sliding over a precipice into the abyss, recollected that it was all a dream, and boldly jumped down. The effect of this commonly was, that I immediately awoke. But I awoke calm and intrepid, which I thought a great acquisition. After this, my dreams were never very uneasy; and, in a short time, I dreamed not at all.

"During all this time I was in perfect health; but whether my ceasing to dream was the effect of the recollection above mentioned, or of any change in the habit of my body, which is usual about that period of life, I cannot tell. I think it may more probably be imputed to the last. However, the fact was, that, for at least forty years after, I dreamed none, to the best of my remembrance: and finding, from the testimony of others, that this is somewhat uncommon, I have often, as soon as I awoke, endeavoured to recollect, without being able to recollect, any thing that passed in my sleep. For some years past, I can sometimes recollect some kind of dreaming thoughts, but so incoherent that I can make nothing of them.

"The only distinct dream I ever had since I was about sixteen, as far as I remember, was about two years ago. I had got my head blistered for a fall. A plaster which was put upon it after the blister, pained me excessively for a whole night. In the morning I

slept a little, and dreamed very distinctly, that I had fallen into the hands of a party of Indians, and was scalped.

"I am apt to think, that as there is a state of sleep, and a state wherein we are awake, so there is an intermediate state, which partakes of the other two. If a man peremptorily resolves to rise at an early hour for some interesting purpose, he will of himself awake at that hour. A sick-nurse gets the habit of sleeping in such a manner that she hears the least whisper of the sick person, and yet is refreshed by this kind of half sleep. The same is the case of a nurse who sleeps with a child in her arms. I have slept on horseback, but so as to preserve my balance; and if the horse stumbled, I could make the exertion necessary for saving me from a fall, as if I was awake.

"I hope the sciences at your good university are not in this state. Yet, from so many learned men, so much at their ease, one would expect something more than we hear of."

For the other letter, I am indebted to one of Dr. Reid's most intimate friends, to whom it was addressed, in the year 1784, on occasion of the melancholy event to which it alludes.

"I sympathize with you very sincerely in the loss of a most amiable wife. I judge of your feelings by the impression she made upon my own heart, on a very short acquaintance. But all the blessings of this world are transient and uncertain; and it would be but a melancholy scene, if there were no prospect of another.

"I have often had occasion to admire the resignation and fortitude of young persons, even of the weaker sex, in the views of death, when their imagination is filled with all the gay prospects which the world presents at that period. I have been witness to instances of this kind, which I thought truly heroic, and I hear Mrs. G—— gave a remarkable one.

"To see the soul increase in vigor and wisdom, and in every amiable quality, when health and strength and animal spirits decay; when it is to be torn by violence from all that filled the imagination, and flattered hope,

is a spectacle truly grand, and instructive to the surviving. To think, that the soul perishes in that fatal moment, when it is purified by this fiery trial, and fitted for the noblest exertions in another state, is an opinion which I cannot help looking down upon with contempt and disdain.

"In old people, there is no more merit in leaving this world with perfect acquiescence, than in rising from a feast after one is full. When I have before me the prospect of the infirmities, the distresses, and the peevishness of old age, and when I have already received more than my share of the good things of this life, it would be ridiculous indeed to be anxious about prolonging it; but when I was four and twenty, to have had no anxiety for its continuance, would, I think, have required a noble effort. Such efforts in those that are called to make them, surely shall not lose their reward."

* * * * *

I HAVE now finished all that the limits of my plan permit me to offer here, as a tribute to the memory of this excellent person. In the details which I have stated, both with respect to his private life and his scientific pursuits, I have dwelt chiefly on such circumstances as appeared to me most likely to interest the readers of his Works, by illustrating his character as a man, and his views as an author. Of his merits as an instructor of youth, I have said but little; partly from a wish to avoid unnecessary diffuseness; but chiefly from my anxiety to enlarge on those still more important labors, of which he has bequeathed the fruits to future ages. And yet, had he left no such monument to perpetuate his name, the fidelity and zeal with which he discharged, during so long a period, the obscure but momentous duties of his official station, would, in the judgment of the wise and good, have ranked him in the first order of useful citizens. "Nec enim is solus reipublicæ prodest, qui candidatos extrahit, et tuetur reos, et de pace belloque censet; sed qui juventutem exhortatur; qui in tantâ bonorum præceptorum inopiâ, virtute instruit animos; qui ad pecuniam luxuriamque cursu

ruentes prensat ac retrahit, et, si nihil aliud, certe moratur: in privato, publicum negotium agit." *

In concluding this memoir, I trust I shall be pardoned, if, for once, I give way to a personal feeling, while I express the satisfaction with which I now close finally, my attempts as a biographer. Those which I have already made, were imposed on me by the irresistible calls of duty and attachment; and, feeble as they are, when compared with the magnitude of subjects so splendid and so various, they have encroached deeply on that small portion of literary leisure which indispensable engagements allow me to command. I cannot, at the same time, be insensible to the gratification of having endeavoured to associate, in some degree, my name with three of the greatest which have adorned this age; happy, if without deviating intentionally from truth, I may have succeeded, however imperfectly, in my wish, to gratify, at once, the curiosity of the public, and to sooth the recollections of surviving friends. But I, too, have designs and enterprises of my own; and the execution of these, which alas! swell in magnitude, as the time for their accomplishment hastens to a period, claims at length, an undivided attention. Yet I should not look back on the past with regret, if I could indulge the hope, that the facts which it has been my province to record, by displaying those fair rewards of extensive usefulness, and of permanent fame, which talents and industry, when worthily directed, cannot fail to secure, may contribute, in one single instance, to foster the proud and virtuous independence of genius; or, amidst the gloom of poverty and solitude, to gild the distant prospect of the unfriended scholar, whose laurels, are now slowly ripening in the unnoticed privacy of humble life.

---

* Seneca, De Tranquill. An. Cap. 3.

NOTES.

Note (A.) page 209.

In the account, given in the text, of Dr Reid's ancestors, I have followed scrupulously the information contained in his own memorandums. I have some suspicion, however, that he has committed a mistake with respect to the name of the translator of Buchanan's History; which would appear, from the MS. in Glasgow college, to have been not Adam, but John. At the same time, as this last statement rests on an authority altogether unknown, being written in a hand different from the rest of the MS. there is a possibility that Dr. Reid's account may be correct; and, therefore, I have thought it advisable, in a matter of so very trifling consequence, to adhere to it in preference to the other.

The following particulars with respect to Thomas Reid may, perhaps, be acceptable to some of my readers. They are copied from Dempster, a contemporary writer; whose details concerning his countrymen, it must, however, be confessed, are not always to be implicitly relied on.

"Thomas Reidus Aberdonensis, pueritiæ meæ et infantilis otii sub Thomâ Cargillo collega, Lovanii literas in scholâ Lipsii serio didicit, quas magno nomine in Germaniâ docuit, carus Principibus. Londini diu in comitatu humanissimi ac clarissimi viri, Fulconis Grevilli, Regii Consiliarii Interioris et Angliæ Proquæstoris, egit: tum ad amicitiam Regis, eodem Fulcone deducente, evectus, inter palatinos admissus, à literis Latinis Regi fuit. Scripsit multa, ut est magnâ indole et variâ eruditione," &c. "Ex aulâ se, nemine conscio, nuper proripuit, dum illi omnia festinati honoris augmenta singuli ominarentur, nec quid deinde egerit aut quo locorum se contulerit quisquam indicare potuit. Multi suspicabantur, tædio aulæ affectum, monasticæ quieti seipsum tradidisse, sub annum 1618. Rumor postea fuit in aulam rediisse, et meritissimis honoribus redditum, sed nunquam id consequetur quod virtus promeretur." Hist. Ecclesiastica Gentis Scotorum, lib. xvi. p. 576.

What was the judgment of Thomas Reid's own times with respect to his genius, and what their hopes of his posthumous fame, may be collected from an elegy on his death by his learned countryman Robert Aytoun. Already, before the lapse of two hundred years, some apology, alas! may be thought necessary for an attempt to rescue his name from total oblivion.

Aytoun's elegy on Reid is referred to in terms very flattering both to its author and to its subject, by the editor of the collection, entitled, "Poëtarum Scotorum Musæ Sacræ." "In obitum Thomæ Rheidi epicedium extat elegantissimum Roberti Aytoni, viri literis ac dignitate clarissimi, in Deliciis Poëtarum Scotorum, ubi et ipsius quoque poëmata, paucula quidem illa, sed venusta, sed elegantia, comparent."

The only works of Alexander Reid of which I have heard, are Chirurgical Lectures on Tumors and Ulcers, London, 1635; and a Treatise of the First Part of Chirurgerie, London, 1638. He appears to have been the physician and friend of the celebrated mathematician Thomas Harriot, of whose interesting history so little was known, till the recent discovery of his manuscripts, by Mr. Zach of Saxe-Gotha.

A remarkable instance of the careless or capricious orthography formerly so common in writing proper names, occurs in the different individuals to whom this note refers. Sometimes the family name is written, Reid; on other occasions, Riede, Read, Rhead, or Rhaid.

Note (B.) page 210.

Dr. Turnbull's work on Moral Philosophy was published in London, in 1740. As I have only turned over a few pages, I cannot say any thing with respect to its merits. The mottos on the title page are curious, when considered in connexion with those inquiries which his pupil afterward prosecuted with so much success; and may, perhaps, without his perceiving it, have had some effect in suggesting to him that plan of philosophizing which he so systematically and so happily pursued.

"If natural philosophy, in all its parts, by pursuing this method, shall at length be perfected, the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged,"

Newton's Optics.

"Account for moral as for natural things." *Pope.*

For the opinion of a very competent judge with respect to the merits of the Treatise on Ancient Painting, *vide* Hogarth's print, entitled, Beer-Lane.

Note (C.) page 225.

"Dr. Moor combined," &c.] James Moor, LL. D. author of a very ingenious fragment on Greek grammar, and of other philological essays. He was also distinguished by a profound acquaintance with ancient geometry. Dr. Simson, an excellent judge of his merits both in literature and science, has somewhere honored him with the following encomium: "Tum in Mathesi, tum in Græcis literis multum et feliciter versatus."

"The Wilsons, both father and son," &c.] Alexander Wilson, M. D. and Patrick Wilson, Esq, well known over Europe by their Observations on the Solar Spots; and many other valuable memoirs.

Note (D.) page 246.

A writer of great talents, after having reproached Dr. Reid with "a gross ignorance, disgraceful to the university of which he was a member," boasts of the trifling expense of time and thought which it had cost himself to overturn his philosophy. "Dr. Oswald is pleased to pay me a compliment in saying, that 'I might employ myself to more advantage to the public, by pursuing other branches of science, than by deciding rashly on a subject which he sees I have not studied.' In return to this compliment, I shall not affront him, by telling him how very little of my time this business has hitherto taken up. If he alludes to my *experiments*, I can assure him, that I have lost no time at all; for having been intent upon such as require the use of a burning lens, I believe I have not lost one hour of sunshine on this account. And the public may perhaps be informed, some time or other, of what I have been doing in the *sun* as well as in the *shade*." *Examination of Reid's Inquiry*, &c. p. 357. See also pp. 101, 102, of the same work.

Note (E.) page 265.

The following strictures on Dr. Priestley's Examination, &c. are copied from a very judicious note in Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, vol. i. p. 111.

"I shall only subjoin two remarks on this book. The first is, that the author, through the whole, confounds two things totally distinct, certain associations of ideas, and certain judgments implying belief which, though in *some*, are not in *all* cases, and therefore not *necessarily* connected with association. And if so, merely to account for the association, is in no case to account for the belief with which it is attended. Nay, admitting his plea, p. 86, that by the principle of association, not only the ideas, but the concomitant belief may be accounted for, even this does not invalidate the doctrine he impugns. For, let it be observed, that it is one thing to assign a cause, which, from the mechanism of our nature, has given rise to a particular tenet of belief, and another thing to produce a reason by which the understanding has been convinced. Now, unless this be done as to the principle in question, they must be considered as primary truths in respect of the understanding, which never deduced them from other truths, and which is under a necessity, in all her moral reasonings, of founding upon them. In fact, to give any other account of our conviction of them, is to confirm, instead of confuting the doctrine, that in all argumentation they must be regarded as primary truths, or truths which reason never inferred through any medium, from other truths previously perceived. My second remark is, that though this examiner has, from Dr. Reid, given us a catalogue of first principles, which he deems unworthy of the honorable place assigned them, he has no where thought proper to give a list of those self-evident truths, which, by his own account, and in his own express words, 'must be assumed as the foundation of all our reasoning.' How much light might have been thrown upon the subject by the contrast! Perhaps we should have been enabled, on the comparison, to discover some distinctive characters in his genuine axioms, which would have preserved us from the danger of confounding them with their spurious ones. Nothing is more evident than that, in whatever regards matter of fact, the mathematical axioms will not answer.

These are purely fitted for evolving the abstract relations of quantity. This he in effect owns himself, p. 39. It would have been obliging, then, and would have greatly contributed to shorten the controversy, if he had given us, at least, a specimen of those self-evident principles, which, in his estimation, are the *non plus ultra* of moral reasoning."

Note (F.) page 276.

Dr. Reid's father, the Reverend Lewis Reid, married, for his second wife, Janet, daughter of Mr. Fraser of Phopachy, in the county of Inverness. A daughter of this marriage is still alive; the wife of the Reverend Alexander Leslie, and the mother of the Reverend James Leslie, ministers of Fordoun. To the latter of these gentlemen, I am indebted for the greater part of the information I have been able to collect with respect to Dr. Reid, previous to his removal to Glasgow; Mr. Leslie's regard for the memory of his uncle having prompted him, not only to transmit to me such particulars as had fallen under his own knowledge, but some valuable letters on the same subject, which he procured from his relations and friends in the north.

For all the members of this most respectable family, Dr. Reid entertained the strongest sentiments of affection and regard. During several years before his death a daughter of Mrs. Leslie's, was a constant inmate of his house, and added much to the happiness of his small domestic circle.

Another daughter of Mr. Lewis Reid was married to the Reverend John Rose, minister of Udny. She died in 1793. In this connexion, Dr. Reid was no less fortunate than in the former; and to Mr. Rose I am indebted for favors of the same kind with those which I have already acknowledged from Mr. Leslie.

The widow of Mr. Lewis Reid died in 1798, in the eighty-seventh year of her age; having survived her step-son, Dr. Reid, more than a year.

The limits within which I was obliged to confine my biographical details, prevented me from availing myself of many interesting circumstances which were communicated to me through the authentic channels which I have now mentioned. But I cannot omit this opportunity of returning to my different correspondents, my warmest acknowledgments for the pleasure and instruction which I received from their letters,

Mr. Jardine, also, the learned professor of logic in the university of Glasgow, a gentleman, who, for many years, lived in habits of the most confidential intimacy with Dr. Reid and his family, is entitled to my best thanks for his obliging attention to various queries, which I took the liberty to propose to him, concerning the history of our common friend.

TRACTS

RESPECTING

THE ELECTION OF MR. LESLIE

TO THE PROFESSORSHIP OF MATHEMATICS

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

A SHORT STATEMENT

OF

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS

RELATIVE TO

THE LATE ELECTION

OF

A MATHEMATICAL PROFESSOR

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH;

ACCOMPANIED WITH

ORIGINAL PAPERS AND CRITICAL REMARKS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The attempts which have lately been made, by an anonymous attack in the newspapers, and by a libellous memorial clandestinely circulated, both in Edinburgh and in different parts of the country,* to create a prejudice in the public mind against Mr. Leslie's character and principles, and more particularly to influence the opinions of individuals who are, in a few days, to sit as judges on a question in which his reputation and interests are deeply involved; rendered it indispensably necessary, previous to the meeting of the General Assembly, to correct the misrepresentations on this subject, which have already remained too long unnoticed. Having had the honor of being chosen to represent the University of Edinburgh in that Venerable House, I have felt it incumbent on me to take upon myself this ungrateful task; and I have accordingly endeavoured, in the following pages, to give such a statement, of the principal facts connected with Mr. Leslie's election, as may convey a sufficient idea of the great outlines of the business to those who had no opportunity of judging of it from their own observation. In the course of this statement, I have also introduced various original documents, which I was anxious to record, and of which I flatter myself, the greater part will be found not unworthy of general attention; and some critical remarks,

* For both the papers here alluded to, see Appendix.

calculated to remove the unfavorable impressions which the papers already referred to may have produced.

As the whole was the hasty production of a few days (which I could ill spare from other occupations), I must entreat the indulgence of my readers to the careless style in which it is written, and to those defects of arrangement which may probably be observable in some parts of my argument. For the correctness of my details, and the fairness of my reasonings, which to my own judgment appear sound and conclusive, I consider myself as fully responsible.

DUGALD STEWART.

College of Edinburgh, May 15, 1805.

A SHORT STATEMENT, &c.

The University of Edinburgh having (on the 30th of January last) been deprived of one of its ablest supporters and brightest ornaments, by the death of the late Dr. John Robison, a very general solicitude was felt, not only by his colleagues, but by all who take an interest in the prosperity of this city, as a seat of learning, that his place should be supplied by some person qualified to succeed to such a predecessor, and to the other eminent men who had filled the same station since the commencement of the preceding century.* The right of election is vested in the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Edinburgh; and, in no former instance, (I may venture to assert with confidence,) was it exercised in a manner more creditable to the Patrons, or more congenial to the wishes of the public, than on this last memorable occasion. Without any solicitation on the part of Mr. Playfair, the vacant chair was offered to that gentleman by the Lord Provost with the unanimous approbation of the Magistrates and Council; and he was accordingly (on the 6th of February) removed from the Professorship of Mathematics to that of Natural Philosophy. The advantage of the change, in point of emolument, is doubtful; but the duties of his new office were more agreeable to Mr. Playfair, as they opened a more enlarged and varied field to his academical labors.

In justice to the numerous and very respectable candidates who aspired to the vacant chair, I think it proper to add, that the solicitations which they address-

---

* Sir Robert Stewart, Sir John Stewart, (son to the former), Dr. Adam Ferguson, and Mr. Russel.

ed to the Patrons of the University were very generally, if not universally, accompanied with a tribute to the literary merits and public services of Mr. Playfair, equally honorable to all the parties concerned. A wish, if I am not misinformed, was in every instance expressed, that Mr. Playfair's views should, in the first place, be consulted, and that the competition should be understood to be confined to that office which he should consider as the least eligible of the two.

The Patrons of the University, in the mean time, having, in compliance with the wishes of the most competent judges, so faithfully discharged this part of their duty, resolved to proceed with all possible deliberation in the execution of the other. A sufficient opportunity was afforded for candidates in every part of the island to bring forward their pretensions; and a determination was openly announced by the Chief Magistrate,* to be guided in his choice by no consideration but the comparative merits of the competitors, and the weight of recommendation which they should severally produce in support of their claims.

Upon the death of Mr. Robison, the first candidate who appeared was the Reverend Thomas Macknight, one of the ministers of Edinburgh; a gentleman who, though unknown to the world as an author, was understood to have cultivated, very successfully, the sciences both of mathematics and of physics; and who, for a considerable time past, had been occasionally employed as assistant to Mr. Robison, when laid aside by indisposition.

At a very early period of the business, he did me the honor to communicate to me his views; and I then expressed to himself, as I have on all occasions done to others, the favorable opinion which I entertained of his abilities and acquirements. With respect, however, to the office in question, I declined to come under any engagements till I should know who were to be his competitors; adding, in the most explicit terms, that if he should succeed in his canvass, the interests of the

* Sir William Fettes of Wamphray, Baronet.

University seemed to me to require that he should resign his ecclesiastical living; and that I trusted that our honorable patrons would make this an essential condition, in the event of his appointment. The truth is, that my advice and my good wishes were all that I ever had to offer in the disposal of an academical office; and that although I have more than once been honored with the form of a consultation, I cannot boast that the slightest attention was, in any one former case, paid to my opinion.

In the course of this conversation with Mr. Macknight, he appeared to acquiesce in the general principle I had stated; mentioning his perfect willingness, to relinquish his parochial charge, if the object of his ambition could not be obtained without such a sacrifice.

I soon however learned, through other channels, that a very different language was held by Mr. Macknight's ecclesiastical friends. Unwilling to break through a practice which, from their success in some late instances, they considered as likely to be soon established into a general rule, they openly avowed their determination, that Mr. Macknight should either enjoy both offices, or should give up all thoughts of the professorship. The alarm, which I felt on this occasion, in common with many others of my colleagues, was not a little increased, when we understood that the opinion of these gentlemen was sanctioned by that of Mr. Ranken,* late Convener of the Trades, and now one of the Trades-Counsellors; a person whose political weight has, for many years past, been perfectly known to all the citizens of Edinburgh. In compliance with the judgment of these advisers, Mr. Macknight is supposed to have departed from that more moderate plan of advancement, to which, immediately after Mr. Robison's death, he appeared, from his conversations both with myself and others, to have limited his hopes.

Under these circumstances, I resolved to address myself directly to the Chief Magistrate. I had the honor of being slightly known to him; and all that I had heard of

* Tailor to his Majesty.

his character conspired to impress me with favorable sentiments of his independence and public spirit. But these prepossessions fell far short of the meritorious conduct which he has actually exhibited in the sequel of this business.

The following copy of my letter to the Lord Provost will explain sufficiently the motives by which I was influenced in taking a step so repugnant to all my usual habits, as a passive spectator of the occurrences of the day. Nothing, in truth, but my complete conviction, that the ruin of the University was threatened by the measures which were avowedly in contemplation among a party of the Edinburgh Clergy, could have led me to think of it. The contents of my letter will, at the same time, show, that I was actuated by no wish to exclude from our Universities those ministers of the church of Scotland, whose literary attainments, or taste for the sciences, might lead them to prefer the duties of an academical life to those connected with the exercise of their clerical functions.

"Edinburgh, 12th February 1805.

"My Lord,

"I did myself the honor of calling upon your Lordship on Saturday, and intended to have repeated my visit yesterday or to-day; but a sore throat, which has confined me to my bed-chamber since Sunday afternoon, lays me under the necessity of troubling your Lordship with a letter.

"After having done the duty of a professor in this University for more than thirty years, (not to mention my hereditary connexion with it for nearly twice that period), I flatter myself I stand in no need of an apology with your Lordship, for presuming to offer my opinion on a subject which I conceive to be deeply interesting to its future prosperity. I have no favor to ask for myself, or any other individual; nor can I be suspected of any motives but such as it is my pride to avow to the public.

"The single point to which I am anxious to draw your Lordship's attention, is the expediency of uniting

professorships with ecclesiastical livings. I shall make no invidious references to what is already passed; but the honorable proof which you have just given of the liberal and enlightened principles by which you are guided in the exercise of your academical patronage, encourages me to hope, that a check may be yet given to a practice, which, if persisted in for a few years longer, must inevitably terminate in the ruin of an establishment from which this city has derived, for more than two centuries, much solid emolument, as well as literary distinction.

"That our theological professorships should be held by ministers of Edinburgh, has been always my opinion and my wish, although I know that even such pluralities are reprobated by many clergymen of this country, who, in their zeal for the interests both of religion and of literature, are certainly not surpassed by any of their brethren. But in no other case whatever, am I able to conceive an argument which can be urged in favor of such a measure, which will not conclude with greater force in favor of uniting different academical offices in the same person. During the very long period of my own connexion with the College, I have had the satisfaction of lending my assistance occasionally to more than one of my colleagues. In the year 1778–79, while professor of mathematics, I gave a complete course of lectures on moral philosophy for Dr. Ferguson; and a few years afterwards, when he was taken suddenly ill, after the commencement of the session, I supplied his place for four months. In the year 1787–88, after being translated to the chair of moral philosophy, I relieved the late Mr. Robison, for one whole season, of his academical duty; and yet on none of these occasions, nor in any case of vacancy which has since occurred, did I indulge the idea of holding more professorships than one, although the practicability of doing so has been repeatedly pressed on me by some of my friends. At this moment I feel myself as competent to discharge the duties of the mathematical professorship, in addition to those of my own, as I was twenty-five years ago, when I united the labors of both. But I can with great

truth assure your Lordship, that were the vacant office now in my offer, the prospect of doubling my income would not make me insensible to the disgrace of giving my sanction to a precedent, so contrary to the spirit of those rules under which our Scotch universities have hitherto flourished.

"In what I have now taken the liberty to state to your Lordship, I have proceeded on the supposition, that Mr. Playfair's office as professor of mathematics is already vacated by his acceptance of the professorship of natural philosophy. At the same time, I cannot see any principle on which that supposition rests, which will not apply equally to any beneficed clergyman who shall accept of the same situation. One thing I may venture to assert, is, that a union of two professorships, so nearly allied in their provinces, would have a propriety, which cannot be alleged in favor of some appointments which have already taken place; and I may add, with equal confidence, that there is no individual in Scotland more fitted than Mr. Playfair to discharge the duties of both offices with credit to himself and advantage to the public. Even in this strongest possible case, however, I should consider a union of two such laborious employments as a pernicious example; and I have the happiness to know that Mr. Playfair's sentiments on this head coincide entirely with my own.

"I am sensible of the impropriety of trespassing so long on your Lordship's time; but a variety of circumstances combine to give me an interest in the literary fame of the university, which cannot be supposed to operate in an equal degree with those who either consider their academical stations as secondary objects, or who may be disposed to employ them in subserviency to particular views of ecclesiastical policy. I own I am sanguine in my hopes, that on this occasion my suggestions will meet with a favorable reception; but even should my expectations be disappointed, I can rely with confidence on your Lordship's candid indulgence; and it will afford some satisfaction to my own mind, that I have neglected no means of which I could avail myself, for the accomplishment of a purpose, which, from the

fullest conviction of its importance to the interests of learning and of the university, I have so sincerely at heart.

"I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

(Signed) DUGALD STEWART."

Right Honorable
The Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

The considerations, very hastily and imperfectly stated in the foregoing paper, were soon after powerfully seconded, in a long and excellent letter to the Lord Provost, from my friend and colleague Mr. Playfair. This letter, I am peculiarly happy in having an opportunity to communicate to the public, as I cannot help indulging the hope, that its good effects may thus be perpetuated among the successors of our present magistrates, when the details of that competition by which it was occasioned shall have sunk into oblivion.

"MY LORD,

"A dangerous innovation, which appears at present to threaten the university, induces me to give your Lordship the trouble of a letter. When I take this liberty, I hope you will not think that I presume too far, as I mean to do no more than lay before your Lordship an opinion about the degree of effort and application necessary for the discharge of duties, in which I have been long exercised; and much less, I flatter myself, will you suppose, that what I now do, argues any distrust in the zeal and attention with which the patrons of the university watch over its interests. Were I less convinced than I am, of the honorable and disinterested motives by which they are actuated, I would sit down in silence to lament a misfortune which I saw no means whatever to avert.

"The measure to which I refer, and which, as I understand, is at present under consideration, is the appointment of a clergyman holding a living in the church, to the mathematical chair in the university. This is

certainly an innovation; because, among all the professors of mathematics in this college, or indeed in any other college in Scotland, no instance of the kind has occurred; and I have called it a dangerous innovation, as I am fully convinced that the consequences of it must prove highly prejudicial to the university. The grounds on which this conviction is founded, are respectfully submitted to your Lordship.

"If we look back into former times, my Lord, the history of our university presents us with a series of mathematical professors, that would do honor to any literary institution in Europe. About a hundred and thirty years ago, James Gregory, the inventor of the reflecting telescope, and the discoverer of many valuable truths in science, was professor of mathematics in the university of Edinburgh. He was succeeded by his nephew David Gregory, a mathematician also of great eminence, and afterwards professor of astronomy at Oxford. The brother of David succeeded him in Edinburgh, and for thirty years upheld the honor of his name and the credit of the university. Maclaurin came next, one of the most celebrated men whom this island has at any time produced, and whose name, after that of Newton, is of all the British mathematicians the best known among foreign nations. Maclaurin was succeeded by the late Dr. Matthew Stewart, a geometer who has left behind him many monuments of the highest talents, and most original genius. His son, who followed him, and who, at an early period of life, taught the mathematical class, with all the correctness and gravity which could have been expected from experience and age, has only been prevented from rivalling his father in the researches of geometry, by the impulse of genius directing him to other objects.

"The retrospect of such an illustrious line of predecessors has for me much more to humble than to elevate, feeling as I do, that I am in nothing entitled to compare myself with them except in the love of science, and zeal to promote its advancement.

"Now, my Lord, of all those whom I have enumerated, there is not one who ever appears to have thought

of uniting his academical office with any other, or to have supposed, that his duty as a professor of mathematics was not a sufficient exercise for whatever skill or talents he might possess. Every one of them devoted his whole mind to science; and most of them, by the discoveries and improvements which they made, have left to posterity the most satisfactory evidence, that their profession, and the studies connected with it, were the great and sole object of their lives.

"Indeed the duties of the professor of mathematics in the university here, if performed even with tolerable care, are a full employment for the ordinary degree of talents and industry which men possess, taking these at the average for which all human institutions should be calculated. Three hours a day taken up in public lectures, in two of which the subjects treated of are often of considerable difficulty, will be found by most men a very sufficient occupation. But if the duties of the mathematical chair are not confined to the mere act of teaching, if they are discharged as they ought to be, and as they have been by the distinguished men who have gone before us, they will require all the time that can possibly be devoted to them. The professor will then have a great deal more to do than merely to give lectures: he will dedicate a large proportion of his time to his own improvement, to the study of those discoveries that have been made, and that are continually making, over all Europe; and he will seek to extend the bounds of science, by new and original investigations. This is the only way of discharging his duty, so as to improve knowledge and to do credit to the university and himself. The professor who takes this view of the matter, and is a real lover of science, will not feel much desire to have more work put into his hands, or to have the number of his avocations increased. Indeed it is the man who is best qualified to be a professor of mathematics, who will find the duties of his office the fullest occupation for him; and the more he is fitted to discharge them well, the less leisure will he find for other pursuits. One, again, who has no particular turn for the mathematics, and who aims only at going through

the ordinary *routine*, without making any discoveries or improvements of his own, may find that he has time to spare after what he conceives to be his academical duty is performed. The capacity of doing one thing well, and that of doing several things indifferently, are very likely to be inconsistent with one another.

"In what I have now the honor of stating to your Lordship, I am not afraid that I shall ever be contradicted by any one really entitled to the name of a mathematician; that is, by any one who loves and understands the science. Were the cause I now plead to be tried before a jury of such men, I should have no doubt of an unanimous verdict being given in my favor.

"In all this reasoning, your Lordship will plainly perceive, that I take it for granted that a minister of the church of Scotland has something to do, and that there are attached to his function many duties of high and serious import, which it requires time and diligence to perform. If this is not true, and if the situation of a clergyman in Edinburgh requires no exertion, or next to none, it must be confessed that the preceding argument falls entirely to the ground.

"Another observation which I have to submit to your Lordship is, that as there are some studies which unite readily, and mutually assist one another, so there are some that do not readily accord, and are not easily pursued at the same time. If we may judge from facts, the duties and habits of a Scotch clergyman stand, with respect to the mathematical sciences, very much in the last of these situations. Though the clergy of our church are undoubtedly a very enlightened body of men, well educated, well informed, and many of them of great learning and talents, yet there are among them very few instances indeed of any one eminent in mathematics or natural philosophy. So much is this the case, that the whole church of Scotland does not, I believe, at present, afford any example but one (Dr. Small of Dundee) of a man known to the public as the author even of a single memoir in any of these sciences. From whence can this proceed, my Lord, but from a certain degree of inconsistency between those sciences

and the studies to which clergymen are naturally led by their profession. The leisure that remains after the duties of the pastoral office are discharged, is often applied to literary objects with great success; and if it is so seldom applied to the mathematics, it is probably because it is not of that uninterrupted kind which is necessary for going deep into this latter science. Were it not for this, or some reason of a similar kind, how could it possibly happen, that of nearly a thousand men, bred to literary pursuits, so few are known for their attainments in those sciences, which every where else occupy so large a proportion of the talents and industry of the learned world?

"If there is any thing in this observation, my Lord, it furnishes a strong argument against uniting the office of a clergyman with that of a professor, either of mathematics or natural philosophy. Indeed all the arguments I have used apply, in a great measure at least, to the latter of these as well as to the former: and it is worthy of remark, that the late Mr. Russell, who filled that chair with great ability, found that it afforded him such entire occupation, that he virtually gave up his business as a surgeon, by resigning it into the hands of a partner.

"Similar conclusions, I think, might be extended to the chairs of Humanity and Greek, because of the number of hours which they employ, and likewise to the chair of Moral Philosophy, because of the vast range of study which it requires. But of these I say nothing, because I can have no information to give that can have any particular claim to your Lordship's attention.

"It is argued, I know, in defence of the measure of uniting professorships in the university with livings in the church, that the emoluments are in both cases too small, and that this is an easy way of augmenting them, without any expense to the public. Now, though it may be true that the incomes abovementioned are too small, so that both ministers and professors are paid considerably under the rate that the education and talents required in their respective professions might entitle them to expect, yet I can by no means admit that

this is a proper remedy for the evil. The augmentation thus made to the fixed salary, that is, to the part of the professor's emolument that is independent of the diligence and ability with which he discharges his duty to his class, is too great, and out of proportion to the rest. If a clergyman, with a living in Edinburgh, was made professor of mathematics, he would have between £300 and £400 a year of fixed salary, which would remain the same whether his duty was well or ill performed. Taking human virtue at its ordinary average, it may very well be doubted whether this would stimulate the industry of the professor. I do not believe it will ever be found a good arrangement in matters of this kind to allow the salary to exceed, or even to equal, the emoluments from the class-fees.

"But waving this consideration: if by the augmentation of the living here proposed, and the consequent augmentation of labor, that labor is worse done, as we have already seen reason to think that it must be, the university and the public must suffer by it. Though the public does not pay any thing additional to its servants, yet if the work is worse performed, the frugality of the measure will not have much to boast of. It seems also clear, that the diminution of the number of places to be occupied by literary men, and affording a decent provision for them, is in itself a great evil, and is an insuperable objection to the union of academical with church preferment.

"Indeed if a union of offices were absolutely necessary to make out a decent provision for the professors of science, it were better to unite one academical chair with another, than with a profession to which it has less affinity. Such a measure, however, would be reprobated by the public, and every friend of science; nor does it seem to me that the measure now proposed is entitled to more indulgence. This argument, however, has been so well treated in Professor Stewart's letter to your Lordship, that it is unnecessary to trouble you with any farther observations on it.

"When it has been urged, that the union of the duties of a clergyman with those of the professor of math-

ematics, was likely to produce more labor than one person could execute to purpose, I have heard it answered, that this consequence was not to be apprehended, as a man trained to business finds that his power of executing increases in proportion to the work which he is required to perform. But if they who argue thus, mean to lay it down as a proposition absolutely, and without any restriction, true, that a man's ability to work constantly increases as the task assigned him increases, and that therefore a man can never be overloaded with business, their position is so absurd and untenable, that no reply need be made to it. If, again, they only mean to affirm, that, for a certain length, a man's activity will keep pace with his duty, and increase as it does, they affirm what is true, but what is of little use to their argument; for it will still remain to prove that the labor of the joint office is within the limits to which their proposition extends. It is certain, that if a man has too little to do, the habits of indolence may prevail, and even the little required may be ill performed; on the other hand, it is no less true, that the task may be so much increased, that his utmost exertion is unequal to it; so that he will do his work ill from mere inability to do it better. The precise quantity of work that may be best and most effectually performed, either by the mental or bodily exertion of an individual, can only, I apprehend, be learned from experience; and if, in the present case, we appeal to the practice of former times, we will conclude, that the duty of the college is sufficient for the professor, and the duty of the church sufficient for the clergyman. The university and the church have both prospered under this principle; and your Lordship, I am persuaded, will hardly think it safe to have the new-fangled doctrines of modern times set up against the sound and tried maxims of experience.

"Another pernicious consequence that in time must infallibly result from uniting the church livings in Edinburgh with those in the university is not difficult to be foreseen. The clergy of Edinburgh being on the spot, would have great advantages for maintaining themselves

in the possession of the chairs in the college above all other competitors. Laymen would be almost necessarily excluded; and, when they stood forward as candidates, would always have a powerful combination against them. The competition for the vacancies in the university would thus be greatly narrowed; and instead of extending, as it does at present, to all the men of letters in the kingdom, would be in effect confined to the ministers of Edinburgh.

"These, my Lord, are the principal remarks that have occurred to me on this subject. I must not, however, conclude without assuring your Lordship, that I have no intention of derogating in the least from the merit of the candidate alluded to above. I have only wished to prove to your Lordship the expediency and importance of the professor whom the patrons of the university shall now think it proper to appoint, coming forward as much disengaged from all business, but that of the college, as all those have been who went before him; in a word, that the professor of mathematics should be at liberty to devote himself entirely to science, without being perpetually drawn aside from his academical labors, by the demands of a higher and more imperious duty.

"I have now, my Lord, only to entreat your indulgence for having trespassed so long on your time.

I am, my Lord, with great respect,
Your Lordship's obedient
and humble servant,
(Signed) JOHN PLAYFAIR."

Edinburgh, 23d Feb. 1805."

The interval which had now elapsed since the vacancy took place, had afforded to the different candidates an opportunity of collecting whatever testimonies they were able to procure to their qualifications and character. To one of the number, a fortunate incident, in the mean time, occurred, which could not fail with candid judges, to incline the scale strongly in his favor. What I allude to, is the Unanimous Resolution of the Council of the Royal Society of London, to adjudge to

Mr. John Leslie Count Rumford's prize for his Experimental Inquiry concerning Heat, published in the course of the last year. This intelligence was communicated to Mr. Leslie in a letter from Sir Joseph Banks, which, as it added not a little, in the opinion of all who read it, to the value of the honor which it announced, I should have wished to insert here, if the urgency of the occasion had allowed me sufficient time to request the permission of the writer.

In addition to this mark of distinction, so flattering to Mr. Leslie, and so gratifying to the feelings of every Scotchman who takes an interest in the literary fame of his country, certificates, expressed in the strongest and warmest terms, were produced from Dr. Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal; from Dr. Hutton, Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich; from the late Professor Robison of this University; and from Mr. Baron Maseres, a gentleman well known in the Republic of Letters, for more than half a century, by his valuable writings, and endeared, by his exemplary worth and amiable manners, to a wide circle of friends. Sir William Erskine of Torry, Baronet, Mr. Dempster of Dunichen, Mr. Josias and Mr. Thomas Wedgewoods, Dr. Hunter of St. Andrew's, and Mr. Playfair of Edinburgh, added their testimonies in favor both of his talents and of his irreproachable life; and, superfluous as it was, after such tributes to his merit as I have just mentioned, I could not deny myself the satisfaction of offering my own.

The strong impression produced by these circumstances on the minds of the Electors was matter of common conversation in this city; when some obscure insinuations, to the disadvantage of Mr. Leslie's character and principles, began to be secretly circulated. The form which they at first assumed was so indefinite, that it was impossible for his friends here to do any thing in his vindication; but two very respectable clergymen in Fife, to whom he was intimately known, (one of them minister of the parish where he had spent his early years, and where he had always continued to reside occasionally,) felt themselves called upon, in justice

to calumniated innocence, to step forward voluntarily in his defence. "If great abilities, highly improved," says one of these gentlemen, "if an unstained moral character, and a tender discharge of every filial duty, recommend to confidence and esteem, these belong to Mr. Leslie." * The following extract from a letter addressed by the other clergyman to a magistrate of Edinburgh, is no less deserving of attention. "Though I have no personal interest connected with the issue of the competition for the Mathematical Class, yet being assured my old acquaintance Mr. Macknight would not be the successful candidate, (unless he resigned his church, which I presume he would not agree to do,) and in compliance with the wishes of some friends who have a claim on any little attention I can show, as well as in justice to Mr. Leslie's character, I was induced to send on Friday last a letter addressed to you. His parish minister also contradicts some reports which have been propagated against his principles. To some persons our vindication may not be quite palatable; but no timid, temporizing policy shall ever deter me from paying that tribute which is due to real worth and talents, wherever they are found." †

The opposition to Mr. Leslie, however, was not yet at an end. A day or two before the time of his actual election, a discovery was made of a very dangerous doctrine inculcated in a note subjoined to his "Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat;" a doctrine which, it was said, involved all the atheistical principles of Mr. Hume's philosophy. Of the existence of such a note I had never heard before; nor indeed could I easily conceive how it was possible to introduce the alleged discussion into a work entirely physical. That the charge was completely unfounded, my knowledge of Mr. Leslie satisfied me from the beginning; but I thought it possible, that if, by any accident, he had really been led to venture on metaphysical ground, (which of all my acquaintance he seemed the least likely to do,) he might, in discussing some point which he had

* Letter from the Rev. Spence Oliphant, Minister of Largo, to Sir William Erskine, Bart. 1st March, 1805.

† Letter from the Rev. Thomas Laurie to Peter Hill, Esq.

not duly studied, have stumbled on ambiguous expressions which would require explanation. I accordingly sent for the book, which till then I had never opened, and was not a little astonished, when I found that the passage objected to contained nothing (nothing at least connected with the alleged charge) but what I myself, and many others much better and wiser than me, had openly avowed as our opinions. The passage, in short, is this:

"Mr. Hume is the first, as far I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. His Essay on Necessary Connexion seems a model of clear and accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which had so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant and invariable sequence.* This will distinctly appear from a critical examination of language, that great and durable monument of human thought," &c. &c.—*Leslie on Heat, Note* 16, *page* 521.

If Mr. Leslie, in the foregoing extract, had qualified the first sentence by saying, that Mr. Hume's *Essay on Necessary Connexion, (so far as it relates to physical causes and effects merely,)* is a model of clear and accurate reasoning, I do not think it possible that the slightest objection could have been made to his assertion, by any person at all acquainted with the subject, even although he had only read the note in question. But when that note is compared with the passage in the text, which it professes to illustrate, it is evident to a demonstration, that it was of *physical causes* alone that Mr. Leslie could be supposed to speak. His argument is directed against the unphilosophical supposition of the agency of invisible *intermedia,* to account for the phenomena of gravitation, (a supposition, by the way, which has been always considered hitherto as one of the most dangerous weapons of the atheist;) and after remarking, that such theories serve only to torture the imagination, without obviating or lessening the difficulty, he concludes with the following very just and striking reflection.

"It is a remarkable and instructive fact in the history of philosophy, that impulsion should have been at one period the only force that was admitted. The motion of a falling stone was certainly not less familiar to the senses than that of a stone which is thrown; but in the latter case, the contact of the hand was observed to precede the flight of the projectile; and this circumstance seemed to fill up the void, and satisfy the imagination. Gravitation sounded like an occult quality; it was necessary to assign some mechanical cause; and if there were no visible impulses to account for the weight of a body, might not that office be performed by some subtile invisible agent? Such was the sway of metaphysical prejudice, that even Newton, forgetting his usual caution, suffered himself to be borne along. *In an evil hour, he threw out those hasty conjectures concerning æther, which have since proved so alluring to superficial thinkers, and which have, in a very sensible degree, impeded the progress of genuine science.* So far from resolving weight or pressure into impulse, we have seen that the very reverse takes place, and that impulse itself is only a modification of pressure. This statement has already some distinguished adherents, and must in time become the received opinion. Science has experienced much obstruction from the mysterious notions long entertained concerning causation." * *Ibid. p.* 135.

At the close of this passage Mr. Leslie refers to Note xvi. at the end of his volume, which note must therefore be considered as a continuation of the foregoing observations; and of consequence the meaning of the word *causation*, when it occurs in the latter, must be limited, according to every rule of fair interpretation, by that

---

* I must request the particular attention of my readers to the very striking similarity between this paragraph and the following passage in Dr. Robison's "Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe." The form of expression, in one instance, is very nearly the same.

"Were it possible for the departed soul of Newton to feel pain, he would surely recollect with regret that *unhappy hour*, when, provoked by Dr. Hooke's charge of plagiarism, he first threw out his whim of a *vibrating æther*, to show what might be made of a hypothesis; *(for Sir Isaac Newton must be allowed to have paved the way for much of the Atomical Philosophy of the Moderns.)* Newton's æther is assumed as a *fac totum* by every precipitate sciolist, who in despite of logic, and in contradiction to all principles of mechanics, gives us theories of muscular motion, of animal sensation, and even of *intelligence and volition*, by the undulations of ætherial fluids."

sense in which alone the author could be possibly supposed to employ it in the former.

Such were the impressions with which I first read Mr. Leslie's Note, and which to my own mind would have been completely satisfactory, if no farther explanation on his part had been offered. It was however with much additional pleasure I perused a letter, written by Mr. Leslie the moment after he received the intelligence of an intended meeting of the Ministers of Edinburgh to oppose his election, and instantly transmitted to the Reverend Dr. Hunter, Professor of Divinity in this University. The sentiments which it expressed (as might have been anticipated from Dr. Hunter's learning and candor) were honored with his approbation; and I have little doubt, that the favorable opinion which they led him to form of the writer, will be sanctioned, almost unanimously, by the judgment of the public.

"Reverend Sir,

"It was only this instant I learned that an opposition to my appointment as Professor of Mathematics is still in contemplation among some members of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and that the ground of this attack is a Note subjoined to my late publication concerning Heat. Although personally unknown to you, the station you hold in the College as Professor of Divinity, and my entire confidence in your candor and liberality, embolden me to address myself to you, in preference to any other individual, in order to shelter me from the most unjust of all imputations, by calling the attention of the Presbytery to the following particulars.

"In the first place, I must beg leave to observe, that the Note in question refers entirely to the relation between *Cause and Effect*, considered as an object of physical examination, being only a more full illustration of some reasonings in the text, in opposition to the unphilosophical theories which attempt to explain the phenomena of gravitation, &c. by means of invisible æthers; and in so far, it will not be disputed, that I am supported by the unanimous voice of all the soundest philosophers and divines of the present age. The gross mis-

application which Mr. Hume has made of these premises, to invalidate the argument for the existence of the Deity, it did not fall under my plan to point out in a treatise entirely confined to physical discussions; more particularly as this has been done by Dr. Reid and various other writers, in a manner which I conceive to be completely satisfactory to every reader who understands the argument. Had I been aware of the possibility, by my silence on this point, of affording the slightest color to a misrepresentation of my real sentiments, I should have guarded against it effectually, by following out the speculation a little farther than the nature of my subject seemed to me to require.

"If the pressing circumstances of the present occasion had permitted me to put my thoughts in writing at greater length, I have the fullest conviction, that my ideas on the question to which the note refers would appear to coincide, in every essential respect, with those of the most enlightened adversaries of Mr. Hume's philosophy. But limited as I am to a few moments of time, I can only disavow (which I do with the greatest sincerity and solemnity) every inference which the ingenuity of my opponents may be pleased to draw from the partial view I have taken of the general doctrine, to the prejudice of those evidences on which the truths of religion are founded. If I live to publish another edition of my work, I pledge myself to show in an additional paragraph, how grossly and injuriously I have been misrepresented on this occasion. In the mean time, I beg you may make whatever use of this letter appears to you to be necessary or proper.

"It is painful to be called on, after the habits of intimacy in which I have lived with the most exemplary characters in both parts of the Island, to repel a direct charge of Atheism; but whatever may be the effect of such calumnies on the minds of strangers, it affords me much consolation to think, that they will be heard with contempt and indignation by those who know the real state of my sentiments, and particularly by such as are acquainted with the strictness of those religious principles in which I had the happiness to be educated from my earliest years.

"I have only to add, that my book has now been in the hands of the public for ten months, and has passed through the hands of reviewers of the most opposite descriptions and principles, without the slightest censure (as far as I know) upon the note in question. The mark of approbation which I have recently received from the Royal Society of London, affords, in this respect, a satisfaction still more grateful to my feelings; and when combined with the zeal which that learned body has uniformly manifested in discountenancing every publication which tends in the most distant manner to injure the great interests of religion and morality, it encourages me to hope, that, in the present instance, I shall experience the same candor from the Reverend Presbytery.

"I have the honor to be &c. &c.

JOHN LESLIE.

"*To the Reverend Dr. Hunter.*"

As the state of Dr. Hunter's health made it impossible for him to attend in person the meeting of his brethren, he transmitted the foregoing letter to the Reverend Dr. Grieve, accompanied with his own opinion, that the proceedings against Mr. Leslie should be dropped; and (if I have been correctly informed) the letter was received by Dr. Grieve, while he and the other Ministers of Edinburgh were actually engaged in the deliberations to which it referred. What passed on that occasion, I do not pretend to know with certainty; but one fact is unquestionable, that a majority, if not the whole of the gentlemen present, pronounced Mr. Leslie's letter to be unsatisfactory; and instantly deputed four of their number to the Council-chamber, where the Magistrates were already assembled for the purpose of the election, to enter their protest against that measure, till *their* doubts about Mr. Leslie's principles should be removed. A long paper (which must have been previously prepared, for it takes no notice of Mr. Leslie's letter to Dr. Hunter) was accordingly presented to the Patrons of the University. Of this paper the following is a copy.

"Unto the Right Honorable, the Lord Provost, the Magistrates, and Council of the City of Edinburgh, assembled by citation from Dr. Davidson, acting as Senior Minister of the City, showeth, That by the charter of James the Sixth, erecting the University of Edinburgh, it is expressly provided, that the power of electing Professors in the said University, as committed to the Town-Council, shall be exercised *with the advice of their Ministers*, ('cum avisamento tamen eorum Ministrorum;') and that, though this regulation has been, in recent cases, neglected by the Town-Council, there has been a series of practice conformable to it, extending to instances as late as the election of Professor Dalzel in the year , and that of Dr. Hunter in the year 1780: That there being at present a vacancy in the chair of the Professor of Mathematics in the University, and the Ministers feeling it their duty to insist upon exercising the privilege with which they are thus invested by the Royal Charter, several of them individually have intimated a desire and intention to this effect to different members of the Town-Council, and their sentiments upon this subject have in consequence, been communicated to the meeting ordinarily denominated the Provost's Committee, but that no intimation has hitherto been received of any intention on the part of the Town-Council to apply, in this case, for the advice of their Ministers; That the Ministers being informed that it is, notwithstanding, the design of the Town-Council to proceed to the election of a Professor of Mathematics on Wednesday the 13th current, feel it their duty to remonstrate against the measure of proceeding to such election till their advice be regularly received, hereby protesting against the validity of any election that may take place in the present circumstances, in the face of this remonstrance: That owing to the Ministers being at present denied the exercise of their legal privilege, they are not regularly and officially informed respecting the candidates for the vacant Chair in the University; but trusting, as for this reason they must, to common, uncontradicted report, they have learned from it, and from many of the members of the Town-Council individ-

ually, that one of these candidates is Mr. John Leslie, author of 'An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat;' and they do hereby more particularly remonstrate and protest, in the most solemn manner, against *his* being elected to the said vacant Professorship, because the said Mr. Leslie has avouched to the world, and has endeavoured to support by argument, an opinion calculated to undermine the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed: That the ministers in bringing forward this most serious charge, refer to a note which Mr. Leslie has subjoined to his foresaid 'Inquiry,' commencing with these words: "Mr. Hume is the first, as far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. His *Essay on Necessary Connexion* seems a model of clear and accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which had so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than *a constant invariable sequence*." From which words it is evident, that Mr. Leslie, having, along with Mr. Hume, DENIED ALL SUCH NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN CAUSE AND EFFECT, AS IMPLIES AN OPERATING PRINCIPLE IN THE CAUSE, has, of course, laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God, to prove either his being or attributes: That it is generally understood, that by the wisdom of our fathers, and in consequence of an ecclesiastical interposition, the original author of this doctrine was rejected on account of it, and the dangerous opinions connected with it, when he offered himself as a candidate for a chair in this University; and that the aspect of the present times does not seem to render it more safe than it formerly was, to entrust any who are with reason suspected of infidel principles, with the important charge of the education of youth: That in the event of Mr. Leslie being elected to the said vacant Chair, notwithstanding this representation and protest of the Ministers, they hereby reserve to themselves full power of questioning the validity of such an election,

and of employing whatever means may to them be found competent for preventing Mr. Leslie's *induction* into the office of Professor; with full power, in the event of his induction, to prosecute for his ejection from said office in any competent court, civil or ecclesiastical: That though the Ministers think it their duty to take this step, they have no design nor wish to usurp, or in any degree encroach on the right of patronage, which, in this case, belongs to the Magistrates and Council, and are still willing to receive and attend to any explanation of Mr. Leslie's principles that may in this case be offered: That the Ministers conclude with craving, that the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council will be pleased to order the whole of this representation and protest to be entered upon their record, and to authorize and appoint their clerk to furnish Dr. Grieve, for behoof of the Ministers, with a regular extract of the same. Signed in name and by appointment of the above-mentioned meeting of the Ministers of Edinburgh, by (Signed) HENRY GRIEVE, Præses,"

On the legal question started in this paper concerning the alleged right of *avisamentum*, (a question which is * under discussion in the Supreme Civil Court of this country,) I do not presume to give any opinion. It is proper, however, to mention, that, on the 27th of March, (two days previous to the election,) a bill of suspension was presented to the Lord Ordinary, praying for "an interdict against the Magistrates and Town-Council of Edinburgh, and the Senatus Academicus of the University, discharging them from proceeding further in the business of Mr. Leslie, till the merits of the question shall have been determined by his Lordship;" and that on the same day when this bill was presented, the following interlocutor was pronounced by Lord Armadale. "The Lord Ordinary having considered this bill, and heard the agents for the parties: In respect that the Ministers of Edinburgh, although they by the charter founded on may be entitled to advise with the Magis-

* I have heard that this question is, for the present, given up by the Ministers of Edinburgh; but this I do not know to be a fact.

trates of Edinburgh in the presentation of Professors in the College, have not by said charter any right of negative or interdict upon the Magistrates' power of presentation, and that it is not alleged in this bill, that the Ministers have in any case exercised a right of negative or interdict against the Magistrates, refuses to grant any interdict in this case: but appoints the bill to be answered as to the discussion of any question betwixt the parties as to their respective rights or interests." It was under the express sanction, therefore, of judicial authority, that the Magistrates determined to proceed in Mr. Leslie's election.

No instance, it is believed, is on record, in which an *avisamentum* of the Ministers of Edinburgh was before interposed in the election of a Mathematical Professor: and yet it does not appear, from the list already produced of those who have held that office since the year 1674, that any inconvenience has resulted to the public from the neglect of that ceremony. In former times, however, it must be remembered, when the idea had not been yet conceived of the possibility of uniting Professorships and Ecclesiastical Livings in the same persons, some plausible arguments might have been urged in favor of the expediency of a right of *avisamentum* which will not apply now, when the Clergy of Edinburgh, by aspiring at every University office which becomes vacant beyond the circles of Medicine and of Law, have so clear an interest in discountenancing the pretensions of whatever lay-candidates shall presume to interfere with the monopoly at which they are aiming. No better illustration of this remark can ever occur, than what has actually happened in the case of Mr. Leslie.

The particulars which have been already stated comprehend all the facts to which it seems to me to be necessary at present to call the public attention. The weight however, which the opinion of the Ministers of Edinburgh is justly entitled to possess, on a question so immediately connected with the objects of their professional studies, renders some farther illustration of Mr. Leslie's doctrine necessary, for the vindication of those

who, from the support which they have given to his interests, must be presumed to have also incurred, in some degree, the censure of that learned and reverend body.

With respect to myself, I have only to observe, that the doctrine which has been so strongly objected to in Mr. Leslie's note, coincides exactly, as far as I am able to judge of it, with what I have myself advanced in a work which has been now for many years in the hands of the public. In proof of this, it is sufficient for me to refer to the second section of the first chapter of the *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Vol. I.* and to the notes (C) and (D) at the end of that volume. I mention these references, not because I have the presumption to suppose that my sentiments on a philosophical question can be of any use as a sanction to the speculations of another writer, but merely to show, that in defending Mr. Leslie I have adhered steadily to the principles which I have always maintained.

---

* The two first paragraphs I must beg leave to transcribe here, as they state a distinction which I consider as of essential importance in the general argument, and which has been too frequently lost sight of by some of our best writers on the subject. To this occasional oversight may be easily traced many of their apparent inconsistencies of opinion.

"It seems now to be pretty generally agreed among philosophers, that there is no instance in which we are able to perceive a necessary connexion between two successive events; or to comprehend in what manner the one proceeds from the other, as its cause. From experience indeed we learn, that there are many events which are constantly conjoined, so that the one invariably follows the other: but it is possible, for any thing we know to the contrary, that this connexion, though a constant one as far as our observation has reached, may not be a necessary connexion; nay, it is possible that there may be no necessary connexions among any of the phenomena we see: and if there are any such connexions existing, we may rest assured that we shall never be able to discover them.

"I shall endeavour to show in another part of this work, that the doctrine I have now stated does not lead to those sceptical conclusions, concerning the existence of a First Cause, which an author of great ingenuity has attempted to deduce from it. At present, it is sufficient for my purpose to remark, that the word *cause* is used, both by philosophers and the vulgar, in two senses which are widely different. When it is said, that every change in nature indicates the operation of a cause, the word *cause* expresses something which is supposed to be necessarily connected with the change, and without which it could not have happened. This may be called the *metaphysical* meaning of the word, and such causes may be called METAPHYSICAL OR EFFICIENT CAUSES. In natural philosophy, however, when we speak of one thing being the cause of another, all that we mean is, that the two are constantly conjoined; so that, when we see the one, we may expect the other. These conjunctions we learn from experience alone; and without an acquaintance with them, we could not accommodate our conduct to the established course of nature. The causes which are the objects of our investigation in natural philosophy may, for the sake of distinction, be called PHYSICAL CAUSES."—*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Vol. I. p. 72, 2d Edition.

In the first of the notes now referred to, I have observed, that "in consequence of the inferences which Mr. Hume has deduced from his doctrine concerning cause and effect, some later writers have been led to dispute its truth; *not perceiving, that the fallacy of this part of his system does not lie in his premises, but in the conclusion which he draws from them.*"

I have also observed, that "many writers *before* Mr. Hume had remarked, that 'the object of the physical inquirer is not to trace necessary connexions, or to ascertain the efficient causes of phenomena;' and that, till the publication of Mr. Hume's writings, no person, so far as I know, ever suspected this proposition to have a dangerous tendency." A variety of passages, containing the very same doctrine, from divines and philosophers of the most unquestionable orthodoxy, are there quoted; and I must acknowledge, that I was sanguine enough to hope, that they would be of use in diverting the future attacks of Mr. Hume's opponents from that part of his reasoning which is invulnerable, to the illogical application which he has made of it to establish a most dangerous conclusion altogether unconnected with it. As this pamphlet, however, may come into the hands of some to whom my work is unknown, I think it necessary, in justice to myself, as well as from a deep sense of the infinite importance of the argument, to insert here a few of the passages which I have now alluded to: And, with the same views, I shall avail myself of this opportunity to produce a few additional authorities of a similar nature.

In the front of these quotations, I shall place the very first aphorism of Lord Bacon's *Novum Organon;* an aphorism which will be acknowledged, by all who are able to form a judgment of its import, to express precisely the same doctrine with Mr. Leslie's note, and in a manner still more strong and unqualified.

"*Homo naturæ minister et interpres tantum facit et intelligit quantum de naturæ ordine re vel mente observaverit: nec amplius scit, aut potest.*"

This aphorism, it deserves to be remarked, is not a *metaphysical*, but a *logical* principle: nay, it is the *cardinal*

principle, on which the whole logic of the experimental or inductive philosophy of the moderns hinges. It is, at the same time, a principle, of which even Bacon's professed followers frequently lose sight, particularly in those hypothetical speculations about invisible *intermedia*, which it is Mr. Leslie's object, in this part of his work, to combat.* That part of Mr. Hume's Essay which relates to physical causes is unquestionably the clearest and fullest commentary on it which has yet appeared; and in this point of view, it was justly entitled to the praise which it has received from Mr. Leslie. I only think that he has ascribed more to Mr. Hume than what was really his due, when he bestows on him (or at least seems to do so) the praise of entire originality in his ideas. But Dr. Beattie and many others have been guilty of the same oversight.† Indeed, if I am not much mistaken, I was myself the first writer, who, since the publication of the Treatise on Human Nature, attempted to show, that whatever merit we may allow to Mr. Hume's illustrations, he had been completely anticipated by authors of a more early date, in the essential principle which is at present in question.‡

---

* I have not the *Encyclopædia Britannica* at hand, and cannot venture on references from memory. But whoever consults some of the excellent articles in that work contributed by the late Professor Robison, will find numerous allusions to this very doctrine, considered in its connexion with physics; more particularly with the fundamental principles of one of his most favorite physical speculations,—the *New Theory of Natural Philosophy*, proposed by father Boscovich.

† It is a curious circumstance in philosophical history, that while Mr. Hume was rendering so essential a service to physical science by that part of his essay which is alluded to above, he seems to have had scarcely any idea himself of *this* truly important application of his reasonings. This I conclude, not only from his total silence with respect to Lord Bacon's plan of investigation, (which, if it does not explicitly state Mr. Hume's doctrine concerning our ignorance of necessary connexions, takes it for granted in every step), but from the following passage in one of his letters to the late Sir Gilbert Elliot, Baronet, which, by the favor of Lord Minto, is at present in my possession. The contempt with which he there speaks of mathematical studies affords the most satisfactory evidence of the little attention he had paid to the natural philosophy of the Newtonian school.

"I am sorry our correspondence should lead us into these abstract speculations. I have thought, and read, and composed very little on such questions of late. Morals, politics, and literature have employed all my time; but still the other topics, I must think more curious, important, entertaining, and useful, than any geometry that is deeper than Euclid."——This letter (for it is without a date) appears to have been written about 1750 or 1751.

‡ An opinion coinciding remarkably with that which I am now endeavouring to vindicate, is ascribed to Socrates by Xenophon; and certainly, when we compare it with the state of science at the time, it reflects no small honor on his philosophical sagacity. The Sophists, in ancient Greece, it would appear, like their successors in modern times, entertained some confused notions about *a necessary connexion be-*

It is proper for me to add, that the foregoing aphorism of Lord Bacon plainly refers, like the note of Mr. Leslie, to *the objects of natural philosophy alone*, otherwise it would not only *imply* by inference, but explicitly *assert*, that we know nothing whatever concerning the existence of the Deity, and his attributes. How perfectly consistent, at the same time, or rather how closely connected with each other, are the fundamental truths of religion and Bacon's general proposition, (when that proposition is understood with the limitations which the nature of the subject suggests obviously to every attentive and candid reader,) will appear sufficiently from the following passages, extracted from authors prior to Mr. Hume, all of whom seem to have had a clear perception of that leading principle in his essay which has chiefly attracted the notice of succeeding philosophers. These passages, (the greater part of which are from English divines, but which, I am sure, will not, on that account, meet with the less respect from any one party connected with the established church of Scotland,) the hurry in which I now write obliges me to transcribe simply, without any comment.

"If we except the mutual causality and dependence of the terms of a mathematical demonstration, I do not think that there is any other causality in the nature of things wherein a necessary consequence can be founded. Logicians do indeed boast of I do not know what kind of demonstrations from external causes, either efficient or final, but without being able to show any one genu-

---

tween cause and effect, implying the existence of an operating principle in the cause. They inquired, says Xenophon, ΤΙΣΙΝ ΑΝΑΓΚΑΙΣ *ἕκαστα γίνεται τῶν οὐρανίων.* The same excellent writer informs us of the light in which Socrates regarded those by whom such notions were adopted: ΑΛΛΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΦΡΟΝΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΑ ΤΟΙΑΥΤΑ ΜΩΡΑΙΝΟΝΤΑΣ ΕΠΕΔΕΙΚΝΥΕΝ. Afterwards he adds, *Εθαύμαζε δὲ, εἰ μὴ φανερὸν αὐτοῖς ἐστιν, ὅτι ταῦτα οὐ δυνατόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις εὑρεῖν.*

I had almost forgot to mention, that *Ernesti* translates *ἀναγκὴ, Vis et ordo naturalis quo res fiunt;* which paraphrase, when combined with the Greek word to which it refers, cannot be better rendered into our language, than in the words already quoted from the "Representation and Protest.,"—"*Such a necessary connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause.*"

ine example of any such: nay, I imagine it is impossible for them to do so. For there can be no such connexion of an external efficient cause * with its effect, (at least none such can be understood by us,) through which, strictly speaking, the effect is necessarily supposed by the supposition of the efficient cause, or any determinate cause by the supposition of the effect. Nay, there can be no efficient cause, in the nature of things of a philosophical consideration which is altogether necessary. *For every action of an efficient cause (as well as its consequent effect) depends upon the free will and power of Almighty God, who can hinder the influx and efficacy of any cause at his pleasure; neither is there any effect so confined to one cause, but it may be produced by perhaps innumerable others.* Hence it is possible that there may be such a cause without a subsequent effect, or such an effect, and no peculiar cause to afford any thing to its existence. There can therefore be no argumentation from an efficient cause to the effect, or contrarily from an effect to the cause, which is lawfully necessary."—*Barrow's*† *Mathematical Lectures read at Cambridge.*

---

* Would not Dr. Barrow have conveyed his meaning still more clearly and unequivocally, if, instead of the phrase *external efficient cause*, he had substituted some such phrase as *physical cause*, agreeably to the distinction which I have already pointed out in p. 322?

† The soundness of Dr. Barrow's religious principles was, I believe, never questioned; and although the notions of church-government in which he had been educated would (according to the *present* views of the Presbytery of Edinburgh) have opposed an unsurmountable bar to his appointment as mathematical professor in this university, it is an acknowledged fact, that he discharged the duties of that office at Cambridge with no common ability and success.

A few biographical particulars with respect to this truly great man, one of the very first names in mathematical science, and one of the chief lights of the English Church, are not altogether foreign to a subject discussed in a former part of this pamphlet; and they may perhaps suggest useful reflections to some persons not likely to enter deeply into his philosophical views. The following are transcribed literally from the succinct account of his life in Dr. Hutton's Mathematical Dictionary.

"On Barrow's return from the continent, in 1659, he was episcopally ordained by Bishop Brownrig; and in 1660, he was chosen to the Greek professorship at Cambridge. In July 1662, he was elected Professor of Geometry in Gresham College; in which station he not only discharged his own duty, but supplied likewise the absence of Dr. Pope, the Astronomy Professor. In 1663, the executors of Mr. Lucas having, according to his appointment, founded a mathematical lecture at Cambridge, they selected Mr. Barrow for the first professor; *and though his two professorships were not incompatible with each other, he chose to resign that of Gresham College, which he did May the 20th 1664. In 1669, he resigned the mathematical chair to his learned friend Mr. Isaac Newton, being now determined to quit the study of mathematics for that of divinity. On quitting his professorship, he had*

"*All things that are done in the world, are done either immediately by God himself, or by created intelligent beings:* matter being evidently not at all capable of any laws or powers whatsoever, any more than it is capable of intelligence; excepting only this one negative power, that every part of it will, of itself, always and necessarily continue in that state, whether of rest or motion, wherein it at present is. So that all those things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter, and laws of motion; of gravitation, attraction, or the like; are indeed (if we will speak strictly and properly) *the effects of God's acting upon matter continually and every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent beings.* Consequently there is no such thing, as what men commonly call the course of nature, or the powers of nature. *The course of nature, truly and properly speaking, is nothing else but the will of God producing certain effects in a continued, regular, constant, and uniform manner.*"—*Dr. Clarke's Works,* Vol. II. p. 698. Fol. Edit.

"It is in general no more than effects that the most knowing are acquainted with; for as to causes, they are as entirely in the dark as the most ignorant. What are the laws by which matter acts on matter, but certain effects, which some having observed to be frequently repeated, have reduced to general rules?"—*Butler's Sermons.*

"The laws of attraction and repulsion are to be regarded as laws of motion, and these only as rules or methods observed in the productions of natural effects, the efficient and final causes whereof are not of mechanical consideration. Certainly if the explaining a phenomenon be to assign its proper efficient and final cause, it should seem the mechanical philosophers never explained any thing; their province being only to dis-

---

only his fellowship of Trinity College." The happy effects of this wise and disinterested concentration of his powers may be traced in those inestimable and voluminous writings, which, notwithstanding his short life, he bequeathed to posterity. Dr. Barrow died in the 47th year of his age.

cover the laws of nature; that is, the general rules and methods of motion; and to account for particular phenomena, by reducing them under, or showing their conformity to such general rules."—*Siris, or Philosophical Inquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar Water, by Dr. Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne.*

"There is a certain analogy, constancy, and uniformity in the phenomena or appearances of nature, which are a foundation for general rules, and these are a grammar for the understanding of nature, or that series of effects in the visible world, whereby we are enabled to see what will come to pass in the natural course of things. Plotinus observes, in his third Ennead, that the art of presaging is, in some sort, the reading of natural letters denoting order, and that so far forth as analogy obtains in the universe, there may be vaticination. And in reality, he that foretels the motion of the planets, or the effects of medicines, or the result of chemical or mechanical experiments, may be said to do it by natural vaticination."

* * * * * *

"*As the natural connexion of signs with the things signified is regular and constant, it forms a sort of rational discourse, and is therefore the immediate effect of an intelligent cause.*" *Ib.* pp. 120, 121.

"Here it is worth observing, that all the real true knowledge we have of nature is entirely *experimental;* insomuch that how strange soever the assertion seems, we may lay this down as the first fundamental unerring rule in physics, *that it is not within the compass of human understanding, to assign a purely speculative reason for any one phenomenon in nature;* as why grass is green, or snow is white; why fire burns, or cold congeals. By a *speculative reason,* I mean assigning an immediate *efficient cause a priori,* together with the manner of its operation, for any effect whatsoever purely natural. We find indeed, by observation and experience, that such and such effects *are* produced; but when we attempt to think of the reason *why* and the manner *how* the causes

work those effects, then we are at a stand, and all our reasoning is precarious, or at best but probable conjecture."

"If any man is surprised at this, let him instance in some speculative reason he can give for any natural phenomenon; and how plausible soever it appears to him at first, he will, upon weighing it thoroughly, find it at last resolved into nothing more than mere observation and experiment, and will perceive that those expressions generally used to describe the *cause* or manner of the productions of nature, do really signify nothing more than the *effects*."—*The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding. London*, 1737, *3d Edition.*

In this extract the doctrine in question is stated with such an uncommon clearness and precision, that I confess it was not without some surprise I first read it, after all that I knew had been previously alleged to the same purpose by Barrow, Berkeley, and others. Of the author of the work now referred to, I know nothing; nor was I even acquainted with its title, till I met with the first sentence of the foregoing passage in the preface to the second volume of *Dr. Stephen Hale's Statical Essays;* where, it may be worth while to add, it is not only quoted, but sanctioned by the approbation of that pious and ingenious writer.*

If any one of the foregoing passages were to be judged of merely from the sentences which relate to those established conjunctions about which Natural Philosophy is conversant, it would justify precisely the same interpretation which has been put on Mr Leslie's Note; and yet, it appears how intimately connected

* If any person doubts still of the consistency of this doctrine with the most orthodox opinions, I must request him to look into the work last quoted, and into another book by the same author, entitled *Divine Analogy.*—I have heard them ascribed to Dr. Peter Brown, Bishop of Cork.

With respect to the connexion between impulse and motion, which, of all the physical phenomena we know, seems, on a superficial view, to furnish the strongest objection to the general conclusion adopted by these writers, the curious reader will find some very remarkable observations in Locke's Essay, b. 2. chap. 23. § 28, 29.

this *now* obnoxious opinion was, in the minds of these excellent writers, with the most devout impressions concerning the existence and the power of God. Nor are the clauses which I have printed in *Italics* introduced to qualify the foregoing doctrine, or to prevent misapprehensions of its apparent tendency. They are stated as the obvious and inevitable *consequences* to which that doctrine leads. The greater part of these writers, it must at the same time be remembered, were treating professedly of subjects, in the discussion of which the establishment of the theological inference was their professed object; whereas the title of Mr. Leslie's book announces "An Experimental Inquiry concerning the Nature and Propagation of Heat;" an inquiry, in which the *premises* of the argument alone could be of any use for the illustration of his theories, and in which the slightest allusion to Mr. Hume's *sceptical conclusion* would have savoured of insanity.

Perhaps, however, it may be alleged, that the passages hitherto quoted are all from authors *prior* to Mr. Hume, and who were not fully aware of the consequences which he was afterwards to deduce from them. It may be proper, therefore, to subjoin a few other authorities from Philosophers and Divines of a later date.

"What we observe by our external senses, is properly no more than that one thing *follows* another, or the *constant conjunction* of certain events; as of the melting of wax, with placing it in the flame of a candle; and, in general, of such and such alterations in the qualities of bodies, with such and such circumstances of their situation. That one thing is the *cause* of another, or *produces* it by its own efficacy and operation, we never see."—*Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals, by Richard Price, D. D. p.* 30. 2*d Edit.*

In a note on this passage, the author remarks, that "several observations to this purpose are made by *Malebranche*, who maintained, that nothing in nature is ever the proper *cause* or *efficient* of another, but only the *occasion;* the Deity, according to him, being the

sole agent in all effects and events. But *Mr. Hume*," Dr. Price adds, "*has more particularly insisted on the observation here made, with a very different view.*"—*Ibid.*

"With regard to the phenomena of nature, the important end of knowing their causes, besides gratifying our curiosity, is, that we may know when to expect them, or how to bring them about. This is very often of real inportance in life; and this purpose is served, by knowing *what by the course of nature goes before them, and is connected with them; and this therefore we call the cause of such a phenomenon.*"

"If a magnet be brought near to a mariner's compass, the needle, which was before at rest, immediately begins to move, and bends its course towards the magnet, or perhaps the contrary way. If an unlearned sailor is asked the cause of this motion of the needle, he is at no loss for an answer. He tells you it is the magnet; and the proof is clear; for remove the magnet, and the effect ceases; bring it near, and the effect is again produced. It is therefore evident to sense that the magnet is the cause of this effect.

"A Cartesian philosopher enters deeper into the cause of this phenomenon. He observes that the magnet does not touch the needle, and therefore can give it no impulse. He pities the ignorance of the sailor. The effect is produced by magnetic effluvia or subtile matter, which passes from the magnet to the needle, and forces it from its place. He can even show you in a figure, where these magnetic effluvia issue from the magnet, what round they take, and what way they return home again: and thus he thinks he comprehends perfectly how, and by what cause, the motion of the needle is produced.

"A Newtonian philosopher inquires what proof can be offered for the existence of magnetic effluvia, and can find none. He therefore holds it as a fiction, a hypothesis; and he has learned that hypotheses ought to have no place in the philosophy of nature. He confesses his ignorance of the real cause of this motion, and thinks that his business as a philosopher is only to find

from experiment the laws by which it is regulated in all cases.

"These three persons differ much in their sentiments with regard to the real cause of this phenomenon, and the man who knows most is he who is sensible that he knows nothing of the matter."—*Reid on the Active Powers*, p. 44.

"It is to this day problematical, whether all the phenomena of the material system be produced by the immediate operation of the First Cause, according to the laws which his wisdom determined; or whether subordinate causes are employed by him in the operations of nature; and if they be, what their nature, their number, and their differences are? and whether, in all cases, they act by commission, or in some according to their discretion?"

"When we are so much in the dark with regard to the real causes of the phenomena of nature, and have a strong desire to know them, it is not strange that ingenious men should form numberless conjectures and theories, by which the soul, hungering for knowledge, is fed with chaff instead of wheat.

"In a very ancient system, love and strife were made the causes of things: In the Pythagorean and Platonic system, matter, ideas, and intelligent mind: By Aristotle, matter, form, and privation. Descartes thought, that matter, and a certain quantity of motion, given at first by the Almighty, are sufficient to account for all the phenomena of the natural world. Leibnitz, that the earth is made up of monades, active and percipient, which, by their active power received at first, produce all the changes they undergo.

"While men thus wandered in the dark in search of causes, unwilling to confess their disappointment, they vainly conceived every thing they stumbled upon to be a cause; and the proper notion of a cause is lost, by giving the name to numberless things which neither are nor can be causes."

"This confusion of various things under the name of causes is the more easily tolerated, because, however

hurtful it may be to sound philosophy, it has little influence upon the concerns of life. A constant antecedent or concomitant of the phenomenon whose cause is sought, may answer the purpose of the inquirer, as well as if the real cause were known. Thus, a sailor desires to know the cause of the tides, that he may know when to expect high-water: he is told, that it is high-water when the moon is so many hours past the meridian; and now he thinks he knows the cause of the tides. What he takes for the cause answers his purpose, and his mistake does him no harm.

"Those philosophers seem to have had the justest views of nature, as well as of the weakness of human understanding, who, giving up the pretence of discovering the causes of the operations of nature, have applied themselves to discover, by observation and experiment, the rules or laws of nature, according to which the phenomena of nature are produced.

"In compliance with custom, or perhaps to gratify the avidity of knowing the causes of things, we call the laws of nature, causes and active powers. So we speak of the powers of gravitation, of magnetism, of electricity.

"We call them causes of many of the phenomena of nature; *and such they are esteemed by the ignorant and half learned.*

"But those of juster discernment see that laws of nature are not agents. They are not endowed with active power, and therefore cannot be causes in the proper sense. *They are only the rules according to which the unknown cause acts.*"—*Ibid.* 286, 287, 288.

1. "There is no necessary connexion known to us between cause and effect.

"Can any person by reasoning, independent of experience, from the cause deduce the effect? No one ever has; and consequently, *to mankind there is no necessary connexion known between cause and effect.*

2. "Is it probable that any necessary connexion is contained in their own nature?

"When the Omnipotent created the world, he probably assigned to all things in it their connexion during

their existence; *e.g.* 1. That action and reaction should be equal and contrary. 2. That one body striking another should, in given circumstances, communicate to it a certain degree of motion. 3. That some ideas in the mind should always accompany or succeed others. But could not the Almighty have assigned different connexions? From his omnipotence, I argue that he could; *and if this could have been the case, there is no connexion in their own nature between cause and effect;* and consequently the latter is not necessarily subsequent to or deducible from the former, but entirely dependent on the Almighty fiat."—*Essay on the Principles of Human Knowledge, by E. Waring, M. D., Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge.* (Printed in 1794.)*

"Science is sometimes defined, the knowledge of causes and effects in nature. But cause and effect, so far as we are enabled to conceive their relation, are terms of the same meaning with *law of nature and its phenomena.*"—*Principles of Moral and Political Science, by Dr. Ferguson,* vol. i. p. 116.

"Those reasoners are in a great mistake, who think to supersede the existence of Mind and Providence, by tracing the operations of nature to their physical laws; for *physical law is the characteristic operation of unerring mind.*"—*Ib.* p. 180.

"Surely the lessons are precious by which Newton has taught us a system of doctrine which cannot be shaken, or share that fluctuation which has attached to all other speculations of curious man. But *this* cannot fail us, because it is nothing but a well-ordered narration of facts, presenting the events of nature to us in a way that at once points out their subordination, and most of their relations. While the magnificence of the

* That the zeal of this author (although a Lay-Professor of Mathematics,) for the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, was not inferior to that of any one of Mr. Leslie's opponents, will be acknowledged by all who have perused the Essay referred to above.

objects commands respect, and perhaps raises our opinion of the excellence of human reason as high as is justifiable, we should ever keep in mind, that Newton's success was owing to the modesty of his procedure. he peremptorily resisted all disposition to speculate beyond the province of human intellect, *conscious that all attainable science consisted in carefully ascertaining Nature's own laws; and that every attempt to explain an ultimate law of nature, by assigning its cause, is absurd in itself, against the acknowledged laws of judgment, and will most certainly lead to error.* It is only by following his example that we can hope for his success."—*Robison's Mechanical Philosophy*, p. 672.

After the strong and explicit terms in which so many of our most profound and pious philosophers have expressed themselves on this subject, it may be reasonably presumed, that the Ministers of Edinburgh weighed the argument with deep and serious attention, before they ventured on the solemn assertion contained in the following sentence, "That Mr. Leslie having, along with Mr. Hume, *denied all such necessary connexion between cause and effect, as implies an operating principle in the cause*, has, of course, laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God, to prove either his being or attributes."

The authors of this paper must have been sensible, that if the foregoing inference be as evidently just as they have stated it to be, it not only involves the complete ruin of Mr. Leslie's character and hopes, but that it rests the whole evidences of religion, both natural and revealed, on the *falseness* of a proposition, which has been unfortunately sanctioned by the authority of all those writers who have been hitherto regarded as the most able and successful defenders of our faith. The sentence, therefore, which has been now quoted, is entitled to all the attention which can possibly be bestowed on it. It must have been well and cautiously pondered before it was committed to paper, and may be fairly considered as the deliberate result of the concentrated wisdom of the

Reverend Gentlemen in whose name the *Representation and Protest* is subscribed.

By affirming, "That the unsophisticated sentiments of mankind concerning necessary connexion are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant invariable sequence*," Mr. Leslie is accused of having, along with Mr. Hume, *denied all such necessary connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause.* Whether Mr. Leslie will be disposed or not to admit this as a fair comment on his words, I am not authorized to say; but one thing is indisputable, that the proposition which he is here accused of *denying*, expresses in the clearest and most precise terms which the authors were able to employ, what they wished to be understood as their own opinion on the point in question. This opinion too, it must be recollected, is essentially connected (according to their own statement) with the most important conclusion which can possibly employ human reason; and therefore, no tenderness for individuals, whatever their station may be, must be allowed to interfere with a free discussion of its real import, and of the consequences to which it leads.

With respect to the real import of the proposition, I acknowledge I am not a little in the dark; and although in my attempts to unriddle it, I have requested the aid of some of the gravest divines and best philosophers in this country, I have not yet heard a single conjecture offered, from which I could derive the smallest assistance. What idea are we to annex to the following words, *Such a necessary connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause?* That these words are altogether without a meaning, I do not presume to assert; but surely, after my own failure in the interpretation, and that of so many of my friends, I may be allowed to say, that something less obscure and oracular might have been expected in the statement of a doctrine, which it has been pronounced so heretical and impious to *deny;* and to which Mr. Leslie has been required, with a zeal not inferior to that which has been

lately displayed in favor of the standards of our national faith, to subscribe his assent.

Without, however, venturing to pronounce with confidence on the sense in which the authors of this *new article of belief* wish it to be understood, it may, I think, be fairly presumed, from the immediate contrast in which it is stated to Mr. Leslie's heresy, that it asserts the existence of *a necessary connexion* between those causes and effects, in the relation of which he affirms, that the human mind can trace nothing more than an *invariable sequence.*

I suspect, that the consequences of this tenet have not been duly considered; and I am not so uncandid as to impute to any man (particularly on a subject of so deeply serious a nature) conclusions of which there is a probability that he was not fully aware.—I am unwilling, in truth, to follow out the argument to its full extent; and shall therefore content myself with recommending to the attentive consideration of Mr. Leslie's opponents, the following truly philosophical observation of my learned friend and colleague Dr. Gregory.

"Supposing that some of the relations of events, particularly that of physical cause and effect, comprehending the circumstance of their *constant conjunction*, as it has been very properly called, which seems always to be implied in strict physical reasonings, as well as in the common notions and actual conduct of mankind, are necessary, like those of quantity, which are the objects of mathematical reasoning; the opinion, that there *must* be an exertion of power or activity to produce such events, would be not merely erroneous, but absurd: for, on that supposition, no power or agency would be requisite to produce them, any more than to produce the relations of geometry; and no power in heaven or earth could prevent them from being what they are."—*Philosophical and Literary Essays, by James Gregory, M. D. Introd. p.* 221.

That a necessary connexion has been supposed to exist among physical events by many philosophers whom it would be unfair to charge with Atheism, I very readi-

ly admit. It was the doctrine of the ancient Fatalists, that all things above and below are linked together by an inevitable necessity; but they did not, therefore, deny the existence of God. "Cum Fatum," says Seneca, "nihil aliud sit quam series implexa causarum, illa est prima omnium causa ex quâ ceteræ pendent." But this doctrine, if not Atheistical, has been condemned by the highest authorities as of the most dangerous tendency to religion. The following are the words of the great Dr. Clarke.

"The notion of the world's being a great machine, going on without the interposition of God, as a clock continues to go without the assistance of a clockmaker, is the notion of materialism and fate, and tends (under pretence of making God a supra-mundane intelligence,) to exclude Providence and God's government in reality out of the world. And by the same reason that a philosopher can represent all things going on from the beginning of the creation, without any government or interposition of Providence; a sceptic will easily argue still farther backwards, and suppose that things have from eternity gone on (as they now do,) without any true creation or author at all, but only what such arguers call *all-wise*, and *eternal nature*."—*Clarke's first Reply to Leibnitz*, p. 15.

It is much to be regretted, that the same metaphorical language on this subject, which was used by the ancient Fatalists, should still continue to be occasionally employed even by some of those philosophers whose opinions, as stated by themselves in other parts of their writings, appear to have coincided exactly with that now quoted from Dr. Clarke. The great merit of Mr. Hume's Essay on Necessary Connexion consists in the clearness and fulness with which he has exposed the inaccuracy of this language; and whatever his own views were in the statement of his argument, candor forces us to acknowledge, that, while it is calculated to keep steadily in the view of Natural philosophers the proper objects of their physical pursuits, it furnishes new and powerful weapons to the friends of religion, if

they were sufficiently aware of their importance. While we condemn therefore his *conclusion* (so far as it has a tendency to weaken the evidence for the existence of the Deity) as sophistical and false, we are called upon, not only by that justice which is due to his philosophical abilities, but by our fidelity to the cause for which we profess to combat, not to involve *both conclusion and premises* in the same condemnation.

I have said that the common language concerning cause and effect is entirely metaphorical. It is in truth "borrowed by analogy," as I have elsewhere observed, "from material objects. Some of these we see scattered about us, without any connexion between them; so that one of them may be removed from its place without disturbing the rest. We can however, by means of some material vinculum, connect two or more objects together; so that whenever the one is moved, the other shall follow. In like manner, we see some events which occasionally follow one another, and which are occasionally disjoined; we see others where the succession is constant and invariable. The former we conceive to be analogous to objects which are loose and unconnected with each other, and whose contiguity in place is owing merely to accidental position; the others, to objects which are tied together by a material vinculum. Hence we transfer to such events the same language which we apply to connected objects. We speak of a connexion between two events, and of a chain of causes and effects."

"This language has even been adopted by philosophers, and by Atheists as well as Theists. The latter have represented natural events as parts of a great chain, the highest link of which is supported by the Deity. The former have pretended that there is no absurdity in supposing the number of links to be infinite. Mr. Hume had the merit of showing clearly to philosophers, that our common language with respect to cause and effect is merely analogical, and that if there be any links among physical events, they must for ever remain invisible to us. If this part of his system be admitted, and if at the same time we admit the authority of that principle of

the mind which leads us to refer every change to an efficient cause, Mr. Hume's doctrine seems to be more favorable to Theism, than even the common notions upon this subject, as it keeps the Deity always in view, not only as the first, but as the constantly operating cause in nature, and as the great connecting principle among all the various phenomena which we observe."—*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Vol. I. p. 74. and *Note* D. p. 549.

Lord Bacon himself, although he sometimes alludes to the allegory of the poets, which represents the series of physical causes and effects under the similitude of a *chain*, of which the highest link is fastened to Jupiter's chair; and although his metaphysical notions concerning their mutual relation seem to have been much obscured by the scholastic phraseology current in his age, yet appears, on the whole, to have been strongly impressed with the idea, that as we know nothing of physical causes and effects but what we learn from experience, so the established order we see is the effect of the constant agency of the Supreme Mind. Hence that sublime expression which he so frequently borrows from the sacred writings: "*Opus quod operatur Deus a principio usque ad finem;*" a branch of knowledge which he expressly describes as placed beyond the examination of the human faculties.

But whence, it may be asked, am I entitled to suppose that Mr. Leslie's opponents deny Mr. Hume's *premises?* I answer, from their own words in the passage now under consideration. If any farther evidence should be required on this point, a satisfactory argument is afforded by that rule of interpretation which they have sanctioned by their own practice. If Mr. Leslie, when his subject led him to speak and to think about physical causes only, is to be presumed, from his unqualified praise of that part of Mr. Hume's Essay which relates to their mutual relation, to have also signified *by his silence* his assent to every inference to which these premises appeared to the original author to lead, his antagonists must *a fortiori* have been understood, *from their*

total silence concerning what is sound and highly important in his premises, to have extended their unqualified censure to these, as well as to his conclusion. As the matter, however, stands, we have no occasion to have recourse to presumptive proof: their own words explicitly assert, that there exists a *necessary connexion between cause and effect* in those cases in which Mr. Leslie confesses that he can only trace a *constant and invariable sequence.*

It still remains for me to take some notice of that qualifying clause with which the existence of this *necessary connexion* is asserted: "*Such a necessary connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause.*"

When I was first informed of this extraordinary sentence, I could not help suspecting that some mistake had been committed by the friend from whom I received my intelligence. I thought it probable, at least, that the word *necessary* was an accidental interpolation, and that the objection stated to Mr. Leslie amounted to this, "That he denied such a connexion between *physical* causes and effects * as implies the existence of an *efficient* cause." Even on this supposition, it is true, that the objection would have been inapplicable to Mr. Leslie, who certainly has said nothing to give the slightest color to such an inference; but the proposition would have had a merit (which, to common understandings, it does not seem actually to possess) of being not inconsistent with itself, nor absolutely incomprehensible. Some indeed, it is possible, might have been inclined to think, that by introducing the phrase of "an operating principle in the cause," no great improvement had been made on our more common forms of expression; † and that

* That it is of the connexion between *physical* causes and effects that the authors of this sentence are speaking, is manifest from this, that it is among such causes and effects alone that any thing like sequence or succession can be observed.

† Since the publication of the first edition of this Statement, I have received from a friend in London (whose name, if I were at liberty to mention it, would add no small weight to whatever comes from his pen) a critical dissertation on the *Metaphysical Test* proposed to Mr. Leslie. As I am unwilling, however, to swell the size of this fugitive performance, I shall content myself at present with transcribing a few sentences relative to the phrase quoted above. My chief intention in doing so is to show, that after all that has been already said on the subject, this rich field of criticism is far from being as yet exhausted.

it was not very favorable to perspicuity to employ the word *cause* within the compass of three lines, in two senses so essentially different from each other.

Let us now consider the charge against Mr. Leslie as it really stands:—That "he denies such a necessary connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause."

And here we are immediately stopped by another ambiguity. I have already endeavoured to show, that it is between *physical* causes and effects that the connexion mentioned in the first part of the clause (and which the authors of this *Credendum* call a *necessary* connexion) is supposed to exist. In what sense, then, are we to understand the word *cause* in the conclusion of the sentence? and to what species of cause is *the operating principle* to be ascribed? It cannot, I should think, be to the Supreme Being; for the connexion is stated to be *necessary*, and, as such, independent of his will. "*Necessity*," says Dr. Clarke,* "excludes all possibility of non-existence, and admits of no limits; is inconsistent with preference, and independent on any will:" or (as Dr. Gregory has extremely well expressed the same thing, in a passage already quoted) "were the relations of cause and effect, comprehending the circumstance of their *constant conjunction*, to be *necessary*, like those of quantity, which are the objects of mathematical reasoning, the opinion, that there *must* be an exertion of power to produce such events, would be not merely erroneous, but absurd: for, on that supposition, no power would be requisite to produce them, any more than to produce the relations of geometry; and no power in heaven or earth could prevent them from being what they are."

The only supposition, then, that remains, is, that the

"The *operating principle* is said to be *in the cause*. The principle, then, is distinct from the cause, and necessarily results from it. It is the principle that operates, and not the cause: the former is active, the latter is inert. The principle, therefore, of which we here speak, is really an attribute of something else, for it is said to be *in* the cause. What, I pray, is the attribute of a cause? What is a cause that operates not by itself, but by a principle in it? But this last question is not to the purpose, for the cause is not stated to operate at all: it is only the principle in it which operates, and the cause produces nothing."

* Defence of Clarke's Fifth Reply to Leibnitz.

operating principle is to be understood to belong to the physical cause itself, connecting it *necessarily* with the effect; or, in other words, that physical and efficient causes are one and the same. And yet (although I declare, *bonâ fide*, that this is the most reasonable interpretation I can put on the sentence) I cannot bring myself to suppose that it was the opinion which its authors meant to express; for they could not fail to be aware, that it is the very essence of the system of Spinoza; a system which, although it acknowledges in words the existence of a Deity, is, in truth, by means of this very doctrine, (the doctrine, to wit, of active powers in physical causes, connecting them necessarily with their effects,) subversive of that fundamental principle of all religion; and which has accordingly, on account of this insidious language, been always regarded by the best judges as one of the most dangerous modifications of Atheism. "The amount of the system," says Dr. Clarke, "is *this*, that all things are equally self-existent, and consequently, that the material world is God." *

In turning over Clarke's works, in quest of the sentence just quoted, another passage occurred to me, which, if I had thought of it sooner, I could have introduced with greater effect in a former part of this argument. The passage, however, must not, on that account, be omitted, more particularly as it applies to the scheme of Spinoza, in common with every other system, which represents the order of events, and the general laws which regulate this order, as altogether the result of necessity.

"All things in the world appear plainly to be the most *arbitrary* that can be imagined, and to be wholly the effects, not of *necessity*, but of wisdom and choice. *Motion* itself, and all its quantities and directions, with the laws of *gravitation*, are entirely arbitrary, and might possibly have been altogether different from what they now are. The number and motion of the heavenly bodies have no manner of *necessity* in the nature of the things themselves. Every thing upon earth is still more

* Clarke's Works, Vol. II. p. 548. Fol. Edit.

evidently arbitrary, and plainly the product, not of *necessity*, but of will."

These observations of Clarke recall forcibly to my recollection the remarks of my much-lamented colleague, the late Professor Robison, in opposition to an opinion of the celebrated M. de la Place, about the *necessary* existence of the law of gravitation. And with a short extract from these, I shall, for the present, dismiss this part of the subject.

"Of all the marks of purpose," he observes, "and of wise contrivance in the solar system, the most conspicuous is the selection of a gravitation in the inverse duplicate ratio of the distances. Till within these few eventful years, it has been the professed admiration of philosophers of all sects. But M. de la Place annihilates at once all the wisdom of this selection, by saying, that this law of gravitation is essential to all qualities that are diffused from a centre. It is the law of action inherent in an atom of matter in virtue of its mere existence. Therefore it is no indication of purpose, or mark of choice, or example of wisdom. *It cannot be otherwise.* Matter is what it is."—*Elements of Mechanical Philosophy*, p. 686 *et seq.*

For Mr. Robison's argument in opposition to this theory, I must refer to his work.*

To those who know any thing of physical astronomy, it is superfluous for me to observe, (in order to prevent any misapprehension of the meaning of these two profound writers,) that although the law of gravitation has all the appearance to us of having been selected out of an infinite variety of others equally possible, yet this law being once fixed, numberless facts with respect to the planetary system follow from it as *necessary consequences*, and are deducible from it by mathematical demonstration, in a manner entirely analogous to that in which one proposition in geometry is inferred from another. This concatenation or connexion, however, although in one

* See some excellent observations on the same subject, in the valuable work of Dr. Paley, entitled *Natural Theology*, p. 413. 4th Edition.

sense as necessary as those which we trace in Euclid, is, if I may use the expression, only *a conditional necessity*, which, if the law were altered, would exist no longer. Nor is this all: It will be found, on an accurate examination, to resolve entirely into a necessary connexion among mathematical quantities and figures, not between physical events succeeding one to another in the order of time. Such necessary connexions as these, the only ones which any sound philosopher can admit, it certainly was not the intention of Mr. Leslie, any more than of Dr. Clarke or of Dr. Robison, to deny. But this concession leaves him as much as ever at the mercy of his opponents, whom nothing will satisfy short of an acknowledgment, that he believes in the existence of "*such necessary connexions between cause and effect as imply an operating principle in the cause.*" *

On reviewing the various interpretations which have presented themselves in the course of our unsuccessful efforts to get at the bottom of this mystery, it is worthy of remark, by what a singular concurrence of circumstances fifteen words have been selected and combined together in such a manner as to render so many differ-

---

* The following passage, which was pointed out to me by a friend, in a book of very high authority in our Ecclesiastical Courts, may, perhaps, help to account for the intolerant spirit which the ministers of Edinburgh have discovered towards Mr. Leslie, for expressing himself in terms not altogether consonant to the above *dogma*. From this passage it will appear how very nearly the philosophical opinions of these gentlemen, concerning the relation between Cause and Effect, coincide with the doctrines sanctioned by the general assemblies of the church of Scotland, at a period when they were accustomed to exercise powers, of which we were in danger of losing the remembrance, in our degenerate times.

"The using of magic arts or charms, though for good ends, as for the curing of diseases in men or cattle, has no place to make a relevant defence. Since the law cannot know *exactly* WHAT EFFICACY THERE IS IN NATURAL CAUSES, it may very well discharge ALL SUCH ACTS WHEREIN THERE IS NO NECESSARY CONNEXION INTER CAUSAM ET EFFECTUM as it pleases, under the pain of witchcraft: Nor can those who are accused complain of severity, since *sibi imputent* that use these forbidden things."—*Collections and Observations methodized, concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland.* By Walter Stewart, Esq. of Perdivan. See Book III. Title IV. Of Witches and Charmers.

The existence of *a necessary connexion inter causam et effectum*, in the case of all physical experiments whatsoever, (those excepted which fall under the description of magic arts or charms,) is here explicitly taken for granted. The idea of *an operating principle in the cause* seems to be a modern improvement;—suggested probably by the former clause, which asserts that the law cannot know *exactly what efficacy there is in natural causes.* Substitute instead of *efficacy* the word *efficiency*, and the two doctrines (as far as it is possible to comprehend the import of either) are one and the same.

ent conjectures concerning their meaning, not only *possible*, but all of them very nearly equally *probable*. The criterion recommended by *Quinctilian* to writers, as the only infallible test of perfect perspicuity, is strongly marked with the good sense of that excellent critic. "Quare non ut intelligere possit, sed ne omnino possit non intelligere curandum." If a rhetorician wished to exemplify to what an extent Quinctilian's precept might be reversed, he would not easily find a better example than the foregoing *Ænigma*. Among all the meanings of which it *appears* to a common understanding to admit, there is not one which we can, in Christian charity, ascribe to its authors. Its *real* meaning alone, *that* according to which its authors are yet to explain it, remains inscrutable. Whatever this meaning may be, I pledge myself to acquiesce in the interpretation which they may be pleased to give to their own expressions; taking the liberty, at the same time, to assure them, that if their paraphrase on this very knotty text shall be as completely satisfactory to the public mind, as the explanations contained in Mr. Leslie's letter have been pronounced to be by the most unexceptionable judges in this part of the island, they may rest contented with the issue of a controversy, which I suspect they already wish that they had not provoked.

In what I have hitherto said, my object has been to show, *in the first place*, That the opinion of Mr. Hume, concerning the relation of cause and effect *in physics*, (the only causes and effects to which Mr. Leslie's note can by any intelligent reader be supposed to apply,) coincides with that of a great majority of our soundest divines and philosophers; and *secondly*, That the *Metaphysical Test* proposed to Mr. Leslie by his accusers was of such a nature as to render it equally impracticable for him to *admit* or to *deny* it; the only meanings which it was possible for a man of common ingenuity to extract from it seeming to be all equally dangerous in their tendency, and its *real* meaning still continuing an impenetrable secret. I shall suppose, however, for a moment, that the case had been otherwise; that Mr. Leslie's note had been as unguardedly expressed as the

censure of his opponents; and that it had *seemed* to lead, by a logical process, to consequences as alarming as those which *their* language has to me the appearance of involving,—I should still (after having perused his solemn disavowal of these consequences) have conceived myself to be bound to give credit to *his* explanations, rather than to my own doubtful comments on his words. Even in such a case, (and a stronger one it will not be easy for the boldest imagination to figure,) it may be reasonably proposed as a subject of doubt, whether, in the present circumstances of this country, and after the times we have witnessed of late years, a wise and good man, a friend to the religion, to the peace, and to the national character of his countrymen, would have judged it expedient, or even excusable, to bring forth abstract subtilties, such as these, from the darkness of that retreat, where the chemical and mathematical disquisitions with which they were surrounded, had, for more than ten months, concealed them from the most vigilant eyes in the United Kingdoms, and to hold them up to public view as a fit subject of discussion to all ranks and degrees of society in Scotland. The *fact* is, that they have already been repeatedly discussed (and discussed with open doors) in our inferior ecclesiastical courts; and that there is now every probability, that in the ensuing general assembly, (at the commencement of the nineteenth century,) our National Church, which so long has proudly contrasted the piety, the learning, and the exemplary lives of her pastors, with the dignities and the opulence of other ecclesiastical establishments in Europe, will, from the intemperate heat of a few individuals, be forced to exhibit the melancholy spectacle of a scholastic dispute among christian divines, about the metaphysical argument for the existence of God. For my own part, whatever the consequences may be, I enjoy the comfort of reflecting, that I did all in my power to avert them; and that, in the very commencement of the business, I *entreated* some of those persons whose advice appeared to me most likely to be effectual, to warn Mr. Leslie's accusers, before their passions had hurried them too far to

allow their pride an apology for retreating, of the extent to which that flame was likely to spread, which they were so blindly and wantonly kindling. *After*, indeed, the discussions which took place in the Presbytery of Edinburgh,—in the presence of an indiscriminate multitude,—in the presence of numbers of our own students, I acknowledge that I felt otherwise. Interests of a higher nature than those of any individual were now at stake. Insult after insult had been offered to the university; and the opinions of our academical youth, concerning the foundations of those essential principles which it is my professional duty to illustrate, and which it has been the great object of my life to defend, were in no small danger of being unsettled by the crude and contradictory notions which were every where afloat. On the one hand, I saw a doctrine, which had been sanctioned by the highest names in theology and in philosophy, and which I myself, for more than twenty years, had labored to establish, from the firmest conviction of its importance, not merely to the progress of physical science, but to the best and highest interests of mankind;—*this* doctrine I saw menaced with the anathemas of a powerful party in the church; while, on the other hand, persecution was preparing, as of old, to display her banners, in defence of an inconsistent jargon of metaphysical words, which waged war with the human understanding. In such circumstances, no alternative was left, but, by meeting the enemy openly in the field, to fall or to conquer. I trembled to think, that there was still a possibility that an escape might have been attempted in the Synod. Happily that danger is now over, and the whole merits of the case must, before the end of the ensuing week, be exposed to the light of day in the general assembly. It is impossible to doubt, that the subject will there meet with all the attention which its importance demands. An injury of no common magnitude has been offered to the interests of our religion, to the credit of the Church of Scotland, and to the literary honors which have long adorned it; and it is in the wisdom and firmness of its Supreme Court alone that a prompt and effectual remedy can be found.

But a tribunal more awful and decisive than that Venerable House, is yet awaiting the authors of this complicated mischief. They are now dragged to the bar of the public. At *that* bar I stand as their accuser; nor will I quit it, till they receive their doom. "*Illic*, et judex tacet, et adversarius obstrepit, *et nihil temere dictum perit:* et si quid tibi ipse sumas probandum est: et omisso magna *semper* flandi tumore, in *quibusdam causis* loquendum est." *

I am not conscious that in any thing contained in the foregoing pages I have expressed myself with a warmth or an asperity which the subject did not merely justify, but imperiously demand. I have confined myself, as far as I was able, to facts and to reasonings, and have often struggled hard to suppress the indignant emotions which I felt rising within me. But if, in any instance, I have unconsciously stepped beyond those limits which it was my earnest wish not to transgress, let Mr. Leslie's accusers reflect on the circumstances of *their own conduct* on the morning of his election. Let them remember, that it was at the critical moment when this gentleman,—a person who had never offended them, or at least whose only *conceivable* offence was his competition with one of *their* colleagues,—when he was flattering himself with the confident hope of obtaining, at length, the reward of a virtuous and laborious life, devoted from his earliest years to the pursuits of science, and not many days after the suffrages of the Royal Society of London had entitled him to lift up his head in this metropolis, as a man who had done honor to his native land; —it was at this moment, that all his future prospects were to be blasted for ever; the well-earned prize which he was about to receive, snatched from his grasp; and he himself—stigmatized as a disgrace to his parent church, proclaimed to be unworthy of belonging to any other, and pointed out to the scorn and execration of the wise and good in every quarter of the globe. Let me remind them, in the last place, that this charge of

* Quinct. Lib. 12. Cap. 6.

Atheism was deliberately and publicly preferred, with all the imposing solemnity of legal forms, within a few hours of the time when Mr. Leslie's explanatory letter had been read in their hearing; and that, in the act of presenting their written remonstrance to the patrons of the university, the letter was not only *suppressed*, but no intimation was given that such a letter existed.

APPENDIX.

Of the spirit and temper with which the opposition to Mr. Leslie has been conducted, no better specimen can be given than the two following papers, one of which appeared lately in the public prints of this city, and the other has been for some time circulated in manuscript, not only here, but in different parts of the country. To the authors of such anonymous and clandestine attempts to influence extrajudicially the opinions of those who are afterwards to sit as judges on the question to which they relate, ample justice will, I doubt not, be done in due time and place. At present, I shall confine myself to a few notes on their contents.

It is indeed with no small mortification that I thus descend to the humble task of commenting on the anonymous speculations of a newspaper metaphysician. With such an adversary, I am fully sensible that I am by no means on equal ground, having formed a resolution in early life, from which nothing, I trust, shall tempt me to depart, never to publish a single sentence on any subject whatever, without the sanction of my name.

No. I.

From the Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thursday, May 2, 1805.

We are authorised to insert the following observations,

Edinburgh, 1*st May,* 1805.

As there appeared, in the different newspapers of last week, a copy of a letter from Mr. John Leslie, who was lately elected Professor of mathematics in the

University of this city, containing a defence of himself against objections that have been stated to his doctrine upon the subject of the relation between cause and effect; and as it was formerly intimated, in the same public manner, that the letter, when originally received and laid before the ministers of Edinburgh, had satisfied Dr. Hunter, and a considerable number of his brethren; it seems, at length, indispensable, that the public should also know the reasons why that letter afforded no satisfaction to others. For, upon the mind of those who have not read Mr. Leslie's book, the assertions contained in his letter might otherwise make an impression very unfavorable to their candor and justice.*

The object of Mr Leslie's letter is an *unqualified* defence of both himself and his doctrine. So far from renouncing any thing that he had asserted in the publication objected to, he charges the objectors with gross and injurious misrepresentation, and only dreads the effect of their calumny on the mind of strangers. And in these circumstances, it is obvious, that any satisfaction to be derived from the letter must depend entirely upon *the defence of the doctrine being just and valid.* For though Mr. Leslie does, at the same time, disavow every inference from his doctrine to the prejudice of religion, this disavowal cannot justify his *continuing* to publish that doctrine, if, upon examination, it shall still be found subversive of all religion.

Mr Leslie rests his defence upon an assertion, "that the note in question refers entirely to the relation between cause and effect, considered as an object of physical examination." Let this assertion be compared with the language of his note, and let the question be thereby determined.

This long and elaborate note commences with these

---

* Mr. Leslie's letter had been read publicly in the Presbytery; and therefore it is not easy to see how its insertion in the newspapers, where, if I recollect right, it was not accompanied with the slightest comment, could furnish any pretence for the publication, in a similar manner, of a set of critical observations, so little adapted to the comprehension of general readers. But it is not surprising, that some persons should feel a little sore on the subject of this letter. If it was judged to be prudent, on the day of Mr. Leslie's election, to withhold it from the magistrates, it could not fail to appear of still greater importance, that it should not be suffered to meet the public eye without a suitable antidote.

very remarkable words: "Mr. Hume is the first, as far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. His *Essay on Necessary Connexion* seems a model of clear and accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which had so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than *a constant and invariable sequence.*"

There is not, in the passage here quoted, a single ambiguous expression: * and it is evident, that, in the concluding sentence, the author expresses himself in terms of such *unlimited* import, as it is impossible to avoid ap-

---

* And yet that passage, short as it is, contains the words, *Necessary Connexion, Cause,* and *Effect.* For the various meanings of which the *first* phrase is susceptible, the writer of the above article is referred to Dr. Gregory's Philosophical Essays, Vol. I, p. 22. (where the subject employs a good many pages). As for the word *cause,* he will allow me to remind him of the following remarks by an author, whom, in a subsequent paragraph, he professes to have read.

"Our natural desire to know the causes of the phenomena of nature, our inability to discover them, and the vain theories of philosophers employed in this search, have made the word *cause* and the *related words* so ambiguous, and to signify so many things of different natures, that they have in a manner lost their proper and original meaning, and yet we have no other words to express it."—*Dr. Reid's Essays on the Active Powers, p.* 288.

"Aristotle, and the Schoolmen after him, distinguished four kinds of causes, the efficient, the material, the formal, and the final. This, like many of Aristotle's distinctions, is only a distinction of the various meanings of an ambiguous word; for the efficient, the matter, the form, and the end, have nothing common in their nature, by which they may be accounted species of the same genus; but the Greek word which we translate *cause* had these four different meanings in Aristotle's days, and we have added other meanings. We do not indeed call the matter or the form of a thing its cause, but we have final causes, instrumental causes, and I know not how many others.

"Thus the word *cause* has been so hackneyed, and made to have so many meanings, in the writings of philosophers, and in the discourse of the vulgar, that its original and proper meaning is lost in the crowd." *Ibid. p.* 44.

So much for the assertion, that in the first paragraph of Mr. Leslie's note *there is not a single ambiguous expression.*

But farther, if it were to be admitted that there was really *no* ambiguous expression in that paragraph, it would follow as a self-evident consequence, that the distinction formerly stated (see p. 325.) between physical and efficient causes is completely unfounded; or, in other words, that *physical and efficient causes are one and the same*; a conclusion which, as I before remarked, is the very essence of Spinozism.

If this is not demonstration, I do not know what deserves the name. We may here indeed justly borrow the language which this writer has himself so rashly and unwarrantably applied to another. "The application of this doctrine does not remain a matter of choice. If the principle be admitted, the conclusion is irresistible." I would be far, however, after all, from being understood to charge even this anonymous metaphysician with any leaning to so monstrous a system. The truth probably was, that, in his zeal to convict Mr. Leslie of Atheism, he neglected to weigh very accurately the import of his own averments.

plying to every thing under the name of *cause*, whether ascribed to *matter* or to *mind*. Yet were the words, as here used, capable of any restricted interpretation, they *might* rather be restricted to the subject of *mind* than to what is merely *physical* or *material*, as stated in the letter. For a living and respectable advocate of the doctrine there avowed, as limited to physical objects, has most suitably observed, that what is merely *physical* can with little propriety be spoken of under the name of *cause*.

Mr. Leslie, however, has furnished us with means of ascertaining the import and extent of his doctrine, in a way that still more effectually precludes the possibility of its being explained in any limited sense, by the unqualified approbation he expresses of what is new and peculiar in Mr. Hume's opinions relative to causation, and particularly of his Essay on Necessary Connexion. For all who have read this essay of Mr. Hume must know, that though he does apply his doctrine to what have been called *physical* causes, the great object of the essay is *metaphysical*, and that the greater part of the reasoning refers directly to the subject of cause, or an efficient principle in *mind*. Mr. Hume's doctrine has, accordingly, been opposed upon this ground, by both contemporary and later philosophers ; and Mr. Leslie, it is believed, is the first person, in this country, that has publicly approved of it.*

* That Mr. Hume's doctrine concerning the relation of cause and effect in physics is sanctioned by the highest theological authorities in our language, has been sufficiently shown in the foregoing pages. That it coincides with the universal opinion of all the soundest philosophers of the present age, will not, I believe, be disputed.

It is no less incontrovertible, (after the light which has been thrown on this subject since Mr. Hume's time), that his reasonings concerning physical causes and effects are completely unconnected, in point of sound logic, with the sceptical conclusion to which he conceived them to be subservient. In fact, this is now so well understood by all who unite with physical science any tincture of general philosophy, that an author who has occasion, in an experimental inquiry, to appeal to such parts of Mr. Hume's Essay as tend to illustrate the rules of inductive investigation, can hardly think himself called on, in every instance, to guard his character against the imputation of Atheism, by entering a formal *caveat* against Mr. Hume's metaphysical inferences. Of this no stronger proof can be given than the following note subjoined by the late pious and ingenious Dr. Henry Hunter * to his English translation of Euler's Letters to a German Princess. I quote from this author in preference to any other, as he was himself, for a considerable number of years, a member of the Presbytery of Edinburgh; a circumstance which renders it somewhat sur-

* Minister of the Scotch Church at London Wall.

Mr. Leslie has, at the same time, ventured a little beyond the precise ground that was marked out by Mr. Hume; for, while Mr. Hume seems only to contend that we can attain no *idea* of a connexion between cause and effect, and are therefore not entitled to reason upon the supposition that there *is* a connexion, Mr. Leslie expressly asserts that no such connexion exists. He accordingly attempts, in his note, to establish this position, by a long etymological argument, intended to show that neither the word *cause*, nor any *synonymous word in any language*, is either designed or calculated to denote any thing more than "first in the order of succession," or, "the object which precedes." This argument is evidently opposed to the reasoning of the most enlightened adversaries of Mr. Hume, who have, with great propriety, contended that the use and import of the word *power* in all languages affords a strong refutation of his doctrine. And there is, besides, an evident impossibility of restricting such an argument to *physical* causes: for if we were not left in possession of a word to denote an efficient principle, how should we henceforth *speak* of such a principle, with reference even to the Divine mind?

---

prising, that Mr. Leslie should have been pointed out by any gentleman connected with that reverend body *as the first person in this country* who has publicly approved of Mr. Hume's reasonings with respect to necessary connexion.

"The properties of matter must ultimately be referred to the arbitrary appointment of the Author of Nature. There are certain principles at which the prudent philosopher will choose to stop, lest, by pushing his researches too far, he involve himself in greater obscurity. *Those who attempted to account for gravity by mechanical impulse, committed an egregious oversight; for the question still recurs, what produces this impulse? No metaphysical work has ever done so much service to philosophy as Mr. Hume's admirable Essay on Necessary Connexion.*"—Vol. I. p. 46. 1st Edition.

The first edition of this translation was published ten years ago; and yet, although the book has since that period been in very general circulation among all classes of readers in Scotland, I have never heard that any one of Mr. Leslie's accusers has thought it necessary to warn his countrymen against its pernicious tendency. For my own part, I cannot help thinking, that the compliment to the Essay in question is expressed by Dr. Hunter in terms too strong and unqualified for a work, which, from its popular style of composition, was likely to fall into the hands of many persons, not well qualified to restrict his approbation (as a scientific reader must immediately perceive from the context it was meant to be restricted,) to those parts of Hume's doctrine which admit of a practical application to physical researches. Yet where is the critic who would presume to draw from the note, as it actually stands, any inference to the prejudice of Dr. Hunter's principles as a philosopher or a divine?

In the first edition of the translation which is now before me, this note is subscribed E. E. *(English Editor.)* In the second edition, it is subscribed F. E. *(French Editor.)* But this is obviously a typographical error, as the whole spirit of the note is in direct opposition to the prevailing tenets of French philosophy.

If the language, then, of Mr. Leslie's note, cannot be otherwise understood than as a denial of an efficient or operating principle in any cause, no reasoning can be necessary to show, that this doctrine, were it admitted, would at once put an end to all possiblity of arguing, from what we have been *accustomed* to call the *works* of God, for the purpose of proving either his Being or his attributes. But, in fact, the doctrine strikes more *directly* at the foundation of religion. The sceptical conclusions of Mr. Hume are not merely a *consequence* of the doctrine ; they are, to a great extent, *contained* in it. The assertion, that there is no operating principle in any cause, is a virtual denial of God as a *Creator*, and of our relation to him, and dependence upon him, as his *creatures.* And the doctrine does not less directly strike against the attributes of God. To assert that there is no operating principle in any cause, is a virtual denial of *Divine power ;* and, accordingly, the original author of this doctrine did not hesitate to affirm, in the very Essay that Mr. Leslie has approved and sanctiond, that *power* seems a word "absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasoning, or in common life." Nor is *power* the *anly* attribute of God that this doctrine would annihilate : for what are his *wisdom* and *goodness* but Divine energies, or, in other words, operating principles ? *

Mr. Leslie speaks, in his letter, of the "gross misapplication that Mr. Hume has made of his premises," intimating that *he* never intended to apply them in the same manner. *But if, by Mr. Hume's premises, we are to understand the whole doctrine of the Essay on Necessary*

---

* It is worthy of observation, that although Mr. Leslie is charged in the two last paragraphs with *denying* the existence of a *connexion* between cause and effect, and also the existence of an *operating principle* in any cause, the charge in the *Representation and Protest*, of his having *denied such a* NECESSARY *connexion between cause and effect as implies an operating principle in the cause*, has entirely disappeared. A similar change of language is still more striking in the circular letter, which forms the next article, the writer of which only charges Mr. Leslie with having *denied* ALL SUCH CONNEXION *between cause and effect, as implies an operating principle in the cause.* The important epithet *necessary* is here very dextrously omitted ; the author probably taking it for granted, that some of his country brethren were better metaphysicians than the magistrates of Edinburgh. I confess I begin to suspect, that he would now be not ill-pleased, that this unlucky word had been also left out in the *original record*, which is to transmit to posterity the particulars of this memorable *Avisamentum.*

*Connexion which Mr. Leslie has adopted as his own,** the application of that doctrine, to the extent in which it has now been stated, does not remain a matter of *choice* to any man who admits the doctrine itself;—if the principle be admitted, the conclusion is irresistible. Mr. Leslie indeed says, that the misapplication of Mr. Hume's premises has already been well pointed out by Dr. Reid. *But every man who has read Dr. Reid's Essays, must know that his object in replying to Mr. Hume, is to resist the premises themselves, and the very doctrine which Mr. Leslie has approved and supported as contained in the Essay on Necessary Connexion.*†

It will not, probably, in these circumstances, appear surprising that they, who object to Mr. Leslie's doctrine, have not received much satisfaction from the pledge he has given, with a view to a future edition of his book,—not a pledge to retract his doctrine, or even to correct

---

* In all the controversial writings into which I have looked, I do not recollect to have met with such an instance of an unblushing want of candor and good faith, as this sentence exhibits. Is it possible for any man of common understanding seriously to doubt, that Mr. Leslie, when he applied the words *premises* and *conclusion* to Mr. Hume's Essay on Necessary Connexion, used them in the same sense in which they are employed in a quotation which the reader will find in p. 322, of this pamphlet?

† It is rather unfortunate for the writer who has hazarded the foregoing remark, that Dr. Reid himself, in the very first of his Essays on the Active Powers of Man, should have expressed himself so clearly on this point, in the following words.

"I acknowledge, that our having any conception or idea of *power* is repugnant to Mr. Locke's Theory, that all our simple ideas are got either by the external senses, or by consciousness. Both cannot be true. *Mr. Hume perceived this repugnancy, and consistently maintained, that we have no idea of power.* Mr. Locke did not perceive it. If he had, it might have led him to suspect his theory; for when theory is repugnant to fact, it is easy to see which ought to yield."

From this passage it appears to a demonstration, that, in Dr. Reid's judgment, the unsound part of Mr. Hume's reasonings concerning *power* lies in that link which connects his premises with his conclusion. This link is Mr. Hume's theory (borrowed, with some slight alterations, from Locke) with respect to *the origin of our ideas;* a theory delivered in a previous Essay, and to which Mr. Leslie has not, in the most distant manner, alluded. If this theory be rejected, (which no person can avoid doing who understands the repeated refutations which it has received from Mr. Harris, Dr. Price, Dr. Reid, and others,) Mr. Hume's conclusion falls to the ground. If it be admitted, Dr. Reid pronounces Mr. Hume's conclusion to be irresistible.

It is worthy of observation, that Dr. Reid, although he asserts Mr. Hume's conclusion concerning the *idea of power,* to follow as a necessary consequence from Mr. Locke's account of the *origin of our ideas,* does not, on that account, seem to have thought himself entitled to charge Mr. Locke with *an intention to subvert all religion, natural as well as revealed.* Some pretty severe strictures on Dr. Reid himself, on this very argument concerning cause and effect, may be found in Dr. Gregory's Essays, (p. 209, *et seq.* Introd.,) and yet, I can venture to assure this metaphysical inquisitor, that, far from exciting on either side the most distant suspicion of a disagreement between them on those great and fundamental principles, with which that argument is so closely connected, this speculative difference of opinion never for one moment interrupted the cordiality of their friendship.

his language, but merely to show "how grossly and injuriously he has been misrepresented."—*They may be allowed to have some degree of confidence in their own judgment for comprehending the obvious import or meaning of words*: * And, even supposing them in an error, which Mr. Leslie, from what he has stated about want of time, might not have it in his power at first to point out, it is presumable that he must have since had leisure to embrace one or other of the opportunities that have been afforded him, of explaining to them their mistakes and misinterpretations, had he found it a practicable task. It is but candid to admit, that his religious professions are sincere, and to suppose that, at the time of his writing the note objected to, he was not duly aware of the dangerous import of the language he has employed: But, if the doctrine of an author cannot be vindicated from such a charge as has been, in this instance, laid, the stronger that his sense of religion is, the stronger obligation should he feel himself under to withdraw, and discontinue to publish what is subversive of religion; and more than this, in the case of Mr. Leslie, has never been expected or desired.

No. II.

MEMORIAL clandestinely sent to various Members of the ensuing General Assembly.†

It is generally known that the Town Council of Edinburgh have lately elected to the Chair of the Professor of Mathematics in the University, Mr. John Leslie, author of an "Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat," and that objections are stated against Mr. Leslie's appointment as a professor by a majority of the ministers of Edinburgh.

---

* How far this confidence is well founded, I leave to my readers to judge. (See the foregoing Pamphlet *passim*, and particularly pp. 344, 345.)

† The near approach of the General Assembly (which meets to-morrow) obliges me to print the following paper without the comments which I originally intended. I have, however, printed either in italics or in small capitals, the clauses which I wish to recommend more particularly to the reader's attention.

These objections, as far as they are personal to Mr. Leslie, are founded upon the publication now referred to, in which there occur different passages very exceptionable in a religious view. But as the ministers who object to Mr. Leslie have no desire to multiply grounds of charge without necessity, they content themselves with directing the attention of others to the Note No. XVI., subjoined to Mr. Leslie's book, in which he has stated and defended an opinion calculated to undermine the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed.

The note commences with these words, "Mr. Hume is the first, as far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. *His Essay on Necessary Connexion* seems a model of clear and accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery, which had so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of Logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant and invariable sequence.*"

It is well known, that Mr. Hume's doctrine of causation, and particularly his Essay on Necessary connexion, are the foundation *of all his infidel tenets;* and it is evident that Mr. Leslie, *in having thus, along with Mr. Hume, denied all such* connexion between cause and effect, as implies an operating principle in the cause*, has of course laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God, to prove either his being or his attributes.

Mr. Leslie proceeds, in the Note referred to, to support his proposition by a long etymological argument, intended to show, that neither the word *cause*, nor any synonymous word in any language, is either designed or calculated to denote any thing more, than "first in the order of succession," or, "the object which precedes;" so that were his reasoning to be held conclusive, we should not even be left in possession of words to convey the idea of an operating power in the Divine Mind. And as the doctrine extends equally to a denial of all connexion between volition in the human mind

* See Note, p. 356.

and the conduct to which it leads, there results from it, as unavoidably, a denial of man being accountable for his conduct.

This doctrine of Mr. Leslie, in which it will be found, upon examination, that, *as a disciple of Mr. Hume*, he has even taken higher ground than was ever ventured on by (his) master, has appeared to the Ministers of Edinburgh in a very different view from those partial heresies, real or supposed, for which Professors in the Universities have been formerly called in question by the Church. *And looking to the publication of this doctrine, in connexion with the circumstances of the times, when there appears an infidel party arraying itself, with increasing confidence, against the religion of the country, they cannot but consider the appointment of Mr. Leslie to be a Professor and a teacher of youth, as a measure of very unfriendly aspect to our Christian Faith, and our Church establishment for its support.*

A letter indeed has appeared from Mr. Leslie, professing to be explanatory of his doctrine; but the Ministers of Edinburgh have found in it little more than an attempt to deny and misrepresent the obvious meaning of words, as if both Mr. Hume's doctrine and Mr. Leslie's referred merely to physical causes; while every man who reads Mr. Hume's Essay in connexion with Mr. Leslie's Note, must perceive that their conjoint doctrine upon the subject of causation is placed upon the broadest ground, extending to every thing under the name of cause, in either matter or mind. Mr. Leslie has indeed added, in his letter, that he did not intend to apply his doctrine to the purposes for which it was applied by Mr. Hume. But to the extent in which the Ministers of Edinburgh have represented his doctrine as hostile to religion,—considered as a doctrine subversive of the argument for the being and perfections of God, and for man being an accountable agent,—the application did not remain to be made; the application is necessary and unavoidable: if the principle be once admitted, no mind can resist the conclusion.

The Ministers of Edinburgh have therefore felt it their indispensable duty, to protest, in the most solemn

manner, against Mr. Leslie's appointment; both upon the grounds now stated personal to himself, and upon the separate ground, that they had a right to be previously advised with by the Town Council, respecting the election of a Professor, in terms of the Charter of James the Sixth erecting the University; by which the power of electing Professors is vested in the Town Council, under the express provision of its being exercised *with the advice of their Ministers*, (" *cum avisamento tamen eorum Ministrorum.*")

The claim of the Ministers of Edinburgh, under the Royal Charter, will naturally fall to be discussed in a civil court. But they would account themselves deficient in the duty they owe to the Church, if they did not also take the proper steps for bringing the whole of this interesting case, if it shall be found necessary, under the consideration of the General Assembly. *In the mean time they are disposed, if they shall err, to take their chance of erring on the side of lenity and forbearance, rather than on that of severity and rigor: and upon this principle they have resolved, that if Mr. Leslie shall consent to withdraw what is offensive in his publication, either by cancelling the leaves of the book which contain the note referred to, or by any other means, equally effectual, that may be more agreeable to himself, they will, in that event, cease their proceeding as far as concerns him individually*, and content themselves with following out the necessary measures against the Town Council, for establishing their right of *avisamentum* in future cases. But as there is hitherto no prospect of Mr. Leslie giving this satisfaction for the offence he has committed against the religion of his country, in which case the dangerous opinions contained in his book would continue to be circulated and published among the youth of the land, under the sanction of the name of a Professor in the University of Edinburgh; it is likely there will be an unavoidable necessity of discussing the whole affair in the General Assembly; with a view to that Venerable Body employing such means of redressing the grievance, as to them may appear wise and competent.

The Ministers who thus object against Mr. Leslie's appointment as a Professor, think it their duty at the same time to mention, that though they take to themselves the name of the *Ministers of Edinburgh*, as being a considerable majority of that body, and though, in this case, they had at first the countenance of several of their ordinary ecclesiastical opponents; all these gentlemen have now deserted them. *The reasons and motives of this desertion, they will not rashly judge or condemn.* But they are aware that their *own* motives are at present called in question, upon a supposition of their being influenced by a regard to the interest of their brother, *Mr. Macknight*, as a candidate for the Mathematical Chair, or by other personal considerations. To the persons who lay this charge, they make no reply. But to others they think it their duty to state, that only one or two of their number ever solicited an individual in favor of Mr. Macknight; and that, before their proceedings in this case commenced, Mr. Macknight's pretensions were entirely out of [the] question; to which facts they only desire to add, that, *were they actuated by any view to their future interest, or that of Mr. Macknight in particular, in relation to the Chairs of the University, the measures they are now adopting would be the most effectual they could employ for defeating their own purpose.*

At any rate, the case which has been stated ought to be judged of upon the single ground of its own merits. The opposite opinions which men may entertain, whether of the motives of those who bring forward this question, or of the general merits of Mr. Leslie as a gentleman and a scholar, cannot with reason be allowed in such a case to influence their judgment of the question itself. For, if the charge that is laid be well founded, it is obvious that the judgment to be pronounced must affect the vitals of our Christian faith, and our Church establishment. *It is therefore hoped, that the laity, connected with the Church, will not, in this instance, refuse to a question more immediately religious, that candid and attentive consideration which the clergy have so often* [*given*] *to the views of their lay breth-*

ren, in cases which more immediately involved the civil interests of the country. And it is not doubted that the Clergy, even in the most distant corners of the Church, will feel a commanding interest in the discussion of a question, in which the credit of religion and the ecclesiastical establishment appear so deeply committed.

Dr. presents best compliments to Mr. , and begs leave to recommmend the preceding paper to his perusal.

20th April, 1805.

No. III.

LIST of the Members of the Presbytery who voted for dismissing the Business relating to Mr. Leslie, when it was first brought before that Court, by the Ministers of Edinburgh, on the last Wednesday of March.

Ministers of Edinburgh.
- Dr. Hunter, Professor of Divinity.
- Dr. Thomson.
- Mr. Simpson.
- Mr. Dickson senior.
- Mr. Black.

Sir H. Moncreiff Wellwood, Bart. D. D.
Dr. Johnston. *
Mr. Dickson junior.
Mr. Walker.
Mr. Buchanan.
Mr. Duncan.
Mr. Robertson,
Mr. Bonar.†

---

* Dr. Johnston did not stay to vote, but gave his opinion, and at next meeting adhered to the dissent from the judgment of the Presbytery.

† In the first edition, the name of Dr. Davidson was by mistake inserted in this list. He was not present at the meeting mentioned above ; but his opinion on the question then under consideration is well known to have agreed with that of the gentleman with whom his name was connected ; and it had been not only previously expressed in a letter to a meeting of the Ministers of Edinburgh, but was referred to in the Minutes of their proceedings which they laid before the Presbytery.

List of those who voted in the Majority on the same Question.

Ministers of Edinburgh.
- Dr. Greive.
- Dr. Baird, Principal of the University.
- Dr. Finlayson, Professor of Logic.
- Dr. Brown, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.
- Dr. Inglis.
- Mr. Macknight.
- Mr. Ritchie,
- Mr. Anderson.
- Mr. Brunton.

Dr. Robert Dickson, (South Leith.)
Mr. Grant.
Mr. Dick.
Mr. Oliver.
Mr. Cameron.*

Whether the Reverend Gentlemen whose names are contained in the first of these Lists, or those mentioned in the second, are the soundest Divines, according to the standards of the Church of Scotland, is a question upon which it does not belong to me to offer an opinion. The former have certainly shown themselves, in the speculative argument connected with Mr. Leslie's Note, by far the soundest philosophers.

To another praise, of a much higher kind, they have been eminently entitled, in all the proceedings relative to this unfortunate contest; the praise of a genuine and truly Christian *moderation*, reflecting credit on themselves and on their order.†

---

* Dr. Moodie, Professor of Hebrew, and one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, was not present (if I am rightly informed) at the meeting of Presbytery; but he spoke afterwards in the Synod, in favor of the Reference to the General Assembly. Dr. Meiklejohn, Professor of Church History, (a Member of the Presbytery of Linlithgow,) voted in the Synod for the same measure.

† Mr. Fleming of Collington was Moderator of the Presbytery at this Meeting. His sentiments are known to have coincided with those of the Minority.

No. IV.

Since the foregoing pages were printed, I have been informed, that some offence has also been taken at the *following* passage in Mr. Leslie's Note. What is the specific objection to it I have not learned, nor can I easily conceive. I can therefore at present, do nothing more than to transcribe the paragraph, and to place in contrast with it a speculation of Dr. Reid's, to which it appears to me in its principal features to bear a very strong resemblance.

"But in conceiving the relation that subsists between cause and effect, do we not *feel* something more than the mere invariable succession of events? I will admit the fact; but I maintain, that, like many other spontaneous impressions, it is a fallacious sentiment, which experience and reflection gradually correct, yet never entirely eradicate. It is a vestige of that extended sympathy which connects us with the material world: It is the shade of that propensity of our nature to bestow life and action on all the objects around us; to clothe them with our own passions and habits, and to discover the image of ourselves reflected from every side. This disposition is very conspicuous in children; nor is it even wholly effaced by the progress of age. Hence the true foundation of what is called figurative language. Vivid imagery always implies a real, though transient belief. Personification is the most familiar either to those not accustomed to repress the spontaneous emotions, or to those who have cultivated the power of recalling the passions in all their native glow. A choleric man, who happens to strike his foot against a stone, vents his rage on that obstacle, because, for the moment at least, he actually believes it to be animated like himself. The efforts of the poet and those of the philosopher are diametrically opposite. The one endeavours to subdue the passions, and to correct our early and false impressions; the other seeks to renew our infant visions, and to expand the warm and illusive creation of untamed fancy. Yet, after a severe exercise of reason, the mind

finds grateful relief in that magical and fantastic coloring which tricks external objects, and diffuses life and sentiment throughout nature. Pomp of language—smoothness and harmony of verse—are only the accessory decorations; fervid animation constitues the soul of descriptive poetry. It is hence that mythology, the religion of the vulgar, has ever been a favorite subject with the poets."—*Leslie on Heat*, p. 525.

"When we turn our attention to external objects, and begin to exercise our rational faculties about them, we find, that there are some motions and changes in them, which we have power to produce, and that they have many which must have some other cause. Either the objects must have life and active power, as we have, or they must be moved or changed by something that has life and active power, as external objects are moved by us.

"Our first thoughts seem to be, That the objects in which we perceive such motion have understanding and active power as we have."

'Savages, says the Abbé Raynal, wherever they see motion which they cannot account for, there they suppose a soul.'

"All men may be considered as savages in this respect, until they are capable of instruction, and of using their faculties in a more perfect manner than savages do.

"The rational conversations of birds and beasts in Æsop's Fables do not shock the belief of children. They have that probability in them which we require in an epic poem. Poets give us a great deal of pleasure, by clothing every object with intellectual and moral attributes, in metaphor and in other figures. May not the pleasure which we take in this poetical language, arise, in part, from its correspondence with our earliest sentiments?

"However this may be, the Abbé Raynal's observation is sufficiently confirmed, both from fact, and from the structure of all languages.

"Rude nations do really believe sun, moon, and stars,

earth, sea, and air, fountains and lakes, to have understanding and active power. To pay homage to them, and implore their favor, is a kind of idolatry natural to savages.

"All languages carry in their structure the marks of their being formed when this belief prevailed. The distinction of verbs and participles into active and passive, which is found in all languages, must have been originally intended to distinguish what is really active from what is merely passive; and, in all languages, we find active verbs applied to those objects, in which, according to the Abbé Raynal's observation, savages suppose a soul.

"Thus we say the sun rises and sets, and comes to the meridian, the moon changes, the sea ebbs and flows, the winds blow. Languages were formed by men who believed these objects to have life and active power in themselves. It was therefore proper and natural to express their motions and changes by active verbs.

"There is no surer way of tracing the sentiments of nations before they have records, than by the structure of their language, which, notwithstanding the changes produced in it by time, will always retain some signatures of the thoughts of those by whom it was invented. When we find the same sentiments indicated in the structure of all languages, those sentiments must have been common to the human species when languages were invented.

"When a few of superior intellectual abilities find leisure for speculation, they begin to philosophize, and soon discover, that many of those objects which, at first, they believed to be intelligent and active, are really lifeless and passive. This is a very important discovery. It elevates the mind, emancipates from many vulgar superstitions, and invites to farther discoveries of the same kind.

"As philosophy advances, life and activity in natural objects retires, and leaves them dead and inactive. Instead of moving voluntarily, we find them to be moved necessarily; instead of acting, we find them to be acted upon; and nature appears as one great machine, where

one wheel is turned by another, that by a third; and how far this necessary succession may reach, the philosopher does not know.

"The weakness of human reason makes men prone, when thy leave one extreme, to rush into the opposite; and thus philosophy, even in its infancy, may lead men from idolatry and polytheism into atheism, and *from ascribing active power to inanimate beings, to conclude all things to be carried on by necessity.*" *

Although the following paper (which has already appeared in print under the authority of the University of Edinburgh,) may not seem, at first view, to have any immediate relation to the subject of the foregoing pages, it will not be considered as altogether out of place in this publication, by those who had an opportunity of observing the rise and progress of the ecclesiastical proceedings which have taken place here, subsequent to the late vacancy in the Mathematical Professorship.

At the College of Edinburgh, the 15th day of March 1805: Which day the *Senatus Academicus*, in a very full meeting, had a letter laid before them by the principal, subscribed by Dr. Greive, and written by authority of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, the tenor of which follows:

"Reverend Sir,

"As convener of a committee of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, I am directed to acquaint you, in their name, for the information of the *Senatus Academicus* of the University, that in a meeting of said Presbytery upon Wednesday, the 27th day of February last, the following resolution was moved and adopted:—'Whereas for many years past the members of the University of Edinburgh have not been in the use of complying with those Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, by which they

---

* Essays on the Active Powers, p. 281 *et seq.* 4to Edit.

are expressly required to acknowledge, profess, and subscribe, before this Presbytery, the confession of faith which was ratified by the said Parliament on the 7th day of June, 1690: It is moved, that the Presbytery should appoint a committee of their number, to write, in their name, a letter to the Rev. Dr. George Baird, Principal of the University, intimating the desire and expectation of the Presbytery, that the laws on this subject shall be observed and obeyed by the said University, and requesting him to communicate the said letter to that learned body, with all convenient speed.'—The Presbytery, after agreeing to this motion, did accordingly appoint a committee for the purpose therein stated, whose orders I now obey in making this communication. At their desire, I beg leave farther to inform you, that the Acts of Parliament to which the Presbytery more particularly refer are, Act 17th of King William and Queen Mary's first Parliament, session 2d, entitled, Act for Visitation of Universities, Colleges, and Schools; and Act 6th of the 4th session of Queen Anne's Parliament, which is entitled, Act for securing the Protestant Religion, and Presbyterian Church Government; and that the General Assembly have specially enjoined Presbyteries to attend to the execution of said Acts. Let me only add, that the committee hope you will be so obliging as to take an early opportunity of laying this letter before the University.

I am, with very sincere esteem,
Reverend Sir,
Your most faithful,
and most obedient servant,
(Signed) HENRY GREIVE."

Edinburgh, March 9, 1805."

Addressed,
" *The Rev. Dr. George Baird, Principal of the University of Edinburgh.*"

The *Senatus Academicus* having deliberated on this subject, with that respectful consideration which is due to every communication from the Reverend Presbytery,

feel it incumbent on them to submit to that Reverend Body a few observations on the contents of Dr. Greive's letter, as well as a short statement of their own views relative to the subject to which the Presbytery has been pleased to call their attention.

As the letter of the Presbytery cannot be supposed to have a reference to any members of the University, but those of the laity who have the honor to belong to it, the *Senatus Academicus* beg leave, in the first place, in justice to this class of their colleagues, to assure the Presbytery, that they were all fully apprised of the existence of those Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, which the Presbytery has thought proper to point out to their notice. By accepting the offices which they hold in the University, they necessarily understood, that their assent to the confession of faith of the National Church was as fully implied, as their allegiance to the Civil Government of the country; and they have accordingly been always ready, when called on by the Reverend Presbytery for the one purpose, or by the Civil Magistrate for the other, to give that public and formal testimony of their faith, and of their allegiance, which is enjoined by law.

Of the expediency of that resolution which the Presbytery has formed, to give effect in future to the same statutes which it has allowed to remain dormant for the long period of half a century, it belongs not to the *Senatus Academicus* to judge; and they have only to regret, that the unlucky coincidence, in point of date, between the letter from the Presbytery, and the interposition of an *Avisamentum* from the ministers of this city in the election of a mathematical professor, is likely to convey an idea to the public, (notwithstanding the solemn assurances which the *Senatus Academicus* have received that the coincidence was *purely accidental)*—that the character or principles of some of the present professors are viewed in an unfavorable light by the Reverend Presbytery; or (what is still more to be dreaded)—that it may afford to those who are ill affected to the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, a pre-

tence of alleging, that so sudden a display of zeal in its support was not altogether without a mixture of some other motives, which the Reverend Presbytery is not equally willing to avow.

Another unfortunate coincidence of dates on the present occasion, has given deep concern to the *Senatus Academicus*. The last instance in which the confession of faith was signed by a professor of this University at the time of his admission, was in the year 1758, by Dr. Monro senior, not more than four years before the election of our late principal, Dr. Robertson. As it is an acknowledged fact, that during the whole time *he* was in office, the laws in question ceased to be enforced, "the desire and expectation of the Presbytery," so formally intimated to his reverend successor, "that these laws *shall be* observed and obeyed by the University," cannot fail to be interpreted into an insinuation, that this inattention to established forms was owing to a blameable remissness on Dr. Robertson's part, in the discharge of his academical duties. This implied censure on his memory the *Senatus Academicus* humbly conceive to be altogether unmerited, inasmuch as they have always understood, that the execution of those laws was entrusted, neither to the principal nor to the University, but to the Presbytery within whose bounds the University is situate. From the terms indeed in which the letter of the Presbytery is expressed, a person unacquainted with the circumstances of the case might be led to conclude, that the requisition, after having been made by the Presbytery, had not been *complied with* or *obeyed* by certain members of the University; but this idea the *Senatus Academicus* cannot for a moment suppose it was the intention of the Reverend Presbytery to convey.

In submitting these considerations to the Reverend Presbytery, the *Senatus Academicus* feel no small degree of satisfaction, in having had an opportunity of doing justice to the memory of a man, to whom the University owes the highest obligations; who, while he added so much to its celebrity by the splendor of his name, maintained, by the moderation, candor, and dignity of his character, an uninterrupted harmony in all the aca-

demical deliberations over which he presided; and made it his study to cultivate, in the intercourse of private life, those habits of mutual cordiality and confidence between the members of the Presbytery and those of the University, which he considered as equally advantageous and honorable to both.

From the manner in which the Reverend Presbytery have been pleased to express themselves, it does not very clearly appear whether they are disposed to enforce the law with respect to future intrants only, or to apply it also to such of the present professors as have not already subscribed the *formula*. In this uncertainty, the *Senatus Academicus* take the liberty of submitting to the serious consideration of the Reverend Presbytery, how far, on the former of these suppositions, their interposition can be vindicated, either in point of equity or of expediency; and whether it may not be understood as implying an unjust suspicion, that it would be regarded as a hardship on some of the present incumbents, if that interposition were to have any retrospect.

In conformity to the foregoing views, the *Senatus Academicus* have only to add, that the members of the University are perfectly willing to do what the laws of the State and of the Church prescribe, and are ready to attend the Reverend Presbytery, whenever they shall be required to appear before it, for that purpose.

In the mean time, the *Senatus Academicus* flatter themselves, that it will not be considered as presumptuous on their part, to remind such of the younger members of the Presbytery as were formerly their own pupils, (and the senior professors have the pleasure to remark, that these form at present a very large proportion of that Reverend Body,) that the interests of religion are most effectually promoted by its happy influence on the character and temper of its ministers; and that an extraordinary profession of zeal for its external forms is never so likely to afford matter of triumph to its enemies, as when a suspicion is allowed to arise in the public mind, that it has been employed in subserviency to the interested views of individuals, or to the purposes of an Ecclesiastical Party.

The *Senatus Academicus* unanimously appointed an extract of this minute to be transmitted by Mr. Dalzel to the Reverend Presbytery of Edinburgh.

Extracted from the record of the University of Edinburgh, by

ANDREW DALZEL, *Sec.*

Addressed,
" *To the Reverend the Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, to be communicated.*"

POSTSCRIPT

TO

MR. STEWART'S SHORT STATEMENT OF FACTS

RELATIVE

TO THE ELECTION OF PROFESSOR LESLIE.

College of Edinburgh, Dec. 28, 1805.

In a pamphlet, published a few days ago, professing to contain an "Examination of my Short Statement of Facts, relative to the late election of a Mathematical Professor in the University of Edinburgh," I observe the following passage.

"None of those ministers of Edinburgh, who have been attacked by Mr. Stewart, originally intended to make any reply to his pamphlet, because, in their own opinion, they were not entitled, without some strong necessity, to continue the discussion of a question, in which the character of an individual was involved, after it had been refused by the competent court. But circumstances that were not foreseen, have rendered this publication indispensable.—The appearance of a *third* edition * of Mr. Stewart's pamphlet, revised and enlarged by himself, *after the question, relative to Mr. Leslie, had been put to rest by the General Assembly*,† and

---

* The third edition was published on the 12th of June.

† Of the respect which these gentlemen are *now* disposed to pay to this solemn decision of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, a judgment may be formed from the following sentence in the concluding paragraph of the same publication: "When the leaders of a party in the state have sufficient influence to determine an assembly-vote, men of the moderate interest in the church do *not* account it *dishonorable* to be found in the minority."

In direct contradiction of the insinuation which is here conveyed, I assert, with confidence, that if there ever was an instance, in which all recollection of political animosity was lost in one common sentiment of indignation, it was on this memorable occasion. Not the slightest allusion occurred, in the whole course of the debate, to any one of those questions, on which the two great parties in the state are accustomed to differ; and it is *a fact known in every corner of Scotland*, that men of

when, of course, there was no apparent motive to the publication, but a desire to injure the reputation of a majority of the Ministers of Edinburgh, seemed to convert the matter at issue into a question between them and Mr. Stewart, directly challenging them to their own defence. And, though their confidence in the good sense of the public inclined them, even in these circumstances, to let the pamphlet and its author pass, without further notice than was bestowed upon them in the assembly of the church, something more has at length appeared absolutely necessary, for the satisfaction of men *at a distance from the scene of the dispute*, who have given credit to Mr. Stewart's GROSS MISREPRESENTATIONS OF FACT, merely because they had not been contradicted; and have even hastily acquiesced in the justice of certain charges, of a philosophical nature, against a body of the Edinburgh clergy, which, if more deliberately considered, could not have required refutation.

"One of their number has therefore thought it his duty to review both the facts and the argument of Mr. Stewart's pamphlet.* And, if that learned gentleman, (who complained of a former paper upon the same subject being *anonymous)* shall desire to know why, in this case also, the name of the author is withheld, the question may be easily answered. The accustomed pledge of the author's name would be most cheerfully given, if the publication were not honored with a responsibility more extensive and satisfying. In the case of the former paper, the publishers were authorized to inform those who should inquire, that *all the ministers of Edinburgh who had objected to Mr. Leslie's appointment,*

---

the most opposite political leanings vied with each other in a laudable and a generous zeal to defend the endangered interests of their religion, and to vindicate the insulted honor of their country. The authors of the above insinuation have themselves intimated, that their pamphlet was chiefly intended for readers *at a distance from the scene of the dispute;* and the *historical fidelity* it displays in the statement of facts which fell under the immediate cognizance of every inhabitant of *this city*, bears ample testimony to the truth and candor of their acknowledgment.

* The reputed writer of this *Examination of my Short Statement* is the Reverend Dr. John Inglis. That it is *not* the composition (as some have supposed) of Dr. Finlayson, may, I think, be presumed from the profound silence which he maintained, not only at the meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, when the answer to the Presbytery's letter was read publicly by the Secretary to the University; but when he himself appeared as a party at the bar of the General Assembly, in the reference from the Synod.

held themselves equally responsible for its doctrine and argument. And though the pen of an individual has again been employed in this reply to Mr. Stewart, *all the same gentlemen are ready to answer for both the facts and the doctrine contained in it.*"

The station which one of these reverend gentlemen* happens to hold, as head of that learned body to which I have had the honor to belong for more than thirty years, claims, on my part, an attention to the foregoing passage, to which I should not otherwise have conceived it to be entitled; and will, I hope, furnish some apology for the notice which I am thus compelled to take, of a performance, unsanctioned by one single name known in the Republic of Letters; and, in itself, not a fit object of criticism to any person who possesses the liberality of a scholar, or the feelings of a gentleman.——Whether I may not, at some after period, avail myself of the intimation which is here given, that the Principal of the University is himself *ready to answer for the facts and doctrines* contained in the pamphlet already alluded to, will depend on the urgency of my *future* engagements. At present, and for several months to come, my time is consecrated to objects, less ungrateful to myself, and, I trust, of somewhat greater importance to the public.—Of this circumstance, indeed, that reverend gentleman, and his nine Coadjutors, seem to have been sufficiently aware, from the season which (after a delay of seven months) they have selected for their publication. None of them could well be ignorant, that their attack was to find me occupied completely and indispensably with my academical labors;—already engaged in one course of lectures, and on the point of beginning another.—Dr. Baird, at least, has the best access to know, that *my* office is not among the number of our College sinecures.

But whatever may be my final determination on this head, I feel it incumbent on me to take the earliest opportunity of calling the attention of our Reverend Principal to the prudence and propriety of that sanction

* Dr. George Baird.

which he has been pleased to bestow on these vindictive effusions of disappointed intrigue and detected ignorance; more particularly, to the propriety and consistency of his conduct, in lending his name to an abusive libel on *a deliberate and unanimous act of the Senatus Academicus*,—voted at a meeting uncommonly numerous, which had been summoned several days before for that express purpose;—a meeting where he himself presided, without venturing to hint the slightest dissent from the general opinion! *—I feel it also incumbent on me, as a duty still more imperious and sacred, (and it is a duty which no regard to personal consequences shall deter me from discharging,) to call the attention of my fellow-citizens, and, above all, of our honorable patrons, to the danger which so imminently threatens their illustrious Seminary, if the reputation of its members is to be traduced, and their honor insulted, from that very chair, to which they and their predecessors had been so long accustomed to look with attachment and with pride; —the chair of Rollock, of Leighton, of Carstairs, of Hamilton, of Wishart, and of Robertson.—While Dr. Baird continued to move quietly in his official round, he cannot accuse me of having failed in that deference which my disposition prompted me to pay to his station, by whatever individual it might chance to be filled: Nor can he reasonably impute to me, even at present, any feelings of undue hostility, if he recollects the kindness with which my regard for his private character led me to receive him as a colleague, at a period when his appointment was the subject of almost universal regret and astonishment. But when his indiscretion and facility have combined to render him the tool of a cabal, in giving circulation to calumnious statements, the falseness of which, if he did not know, he might have easily ascertained to a demonstration,—it is time to remind him, (and when I do so, I am confident I shall be seconded by the public voice,) that such of his colleagues as devote themselves to the active and momentous duties of the University, or who are ambitious to illustrate, by

* See the extracts from the records of the University in the Appendix subjoined to this Postscript.

their writings, this seat of learning and of science, *have a right to expect and to demand*, that he will no longer interrupt, with the ignoble and restless politics of an ecclesiastical junto, those liberal and tranquil pursuits in which he does not participate; nor employ the consequence he derives from his casual elevation, to ruin the interests of a society, which so many others are studious to adorn.—As for his associates among the ministers of Edinburgh, if their late publication should ever draw from me any farther animadversion, it will be indebted for this distinction *solely* to my apprehension of the weight which his high academical situation may give, ("at a distance from the scene of the dispute,") to the details and *innuendos*, which, in common with his reverend bretheren, he has covered with his responsibility. The pledge which I originally gave, when I stood forth as *their* accuser, has been long ago redeemed. I promised *to remain at the bar of the public, till they should receive their doom.* That *doom* I had the satisfaction to hear pronounced (not many hours after these words were written) in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; and the ratification, which it has since received from that more awful tribunal, whose unbiassed and paramount sanction the justice of my cause emboldened me to invite and to solicit, has now fixed and sealed their destiny for ever.—IN THE PLACE WHERE THE TREE HATH FALLEN, THERE MUST IT LIE.

D. S.

APPENDIX TO THE POSTSCRIPT.

No. I. (SEE PAGE 378.)

Edinburgh College, March 15, 1805.

AT a meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, present, the REV. DR. BAIRD, PRINCIPAL; Dr. Monro senior, Mr. Dalzel, Mr. Stewart, Dr. Hill, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Playfair, Dr. Rutherford, *Dr. Finlayson*, Dr. Duncan, Dr. Coventry, *Dr. Moodie*, Dr. Home, Dr. Monro junior, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Russell, Mr. Jameson, Professors.

The meeting having been called on purpose to receive a letter from the Reverend Presbytery of Edinburgh, the Principal accordingly produced and read the said letter, whereof the tenor follows:

"Reverend SIR," &c. &c.*

The *Senatus Academicus* having deliberated upon the subject of this letter, UNANIMOUSLY agreed to appoint a committee to prepare the draught of an answer, which they are to lay before an adjourned meeting of the *Senatus*, to be held on Wednesday next, the 20th inst. at 7 o'clock afternoon; the Committee to consist of the following Professors, viz. Mr. Dalzel, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Hume, Mr. Hamilton, Dr. Gregory, and Dr. Rutherford; and Mr. Dalzel to be Convener.

Edinburgh College, March 20, 1805.

At an adjourned meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, present, the REV. DR. BAIRD, PRINCIPAL; Dr. Hunter,

---

* See Short Statement, &c. p. 367 of this volume.

Dr. Meiklejohn, Mr. Dalzel, Mr. Stewart, Dr. Hill, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Playfair, Dr. Rutherford, *Dr. Finlayson*, Mr. Hume, Dr. Duncan, Dr. Coventry, Dr. Hope, Mr. Hamilton, Dr. Home, Mr. Irving, Mr. Fraser Tytler, and Mr. Russell, Professors.

The meeting being held by adjournment, for the purpose of receiving the report of the committee appointed for preparing an answer to the letter from the Presbytery of Edinburgh, which had been laid before the *Senatus Academicus* at a former meeting, the letter itself was again read; and Mr. Dalzel then produced the report of the said committee, containing a draught of an answer, which, in their opinion, the *Senatus Academicus* should return to the Presbytery: and the same being also read, it was adopted, *nemine contradicente*, by the meeting, as follows, viz. &c. &c.*

The *Senatus Academicus* UNANIMOUSLY appoint an extract of this minute to be transmitted by Mr. Dalzel to the Reverend Presbytery of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh College, March 30, 1805.

At a meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, held in the house of Mr. Dalzel, within the College, who, being to act as Secretary, could not go to the Library on account of indisposition.

Present, the REV. DR. BAIRD, PRINCIPAL; Dr. Hunter, Dr. Monro senior, Mr. Dalzel, Mr. Stewart, Dr. Hill, Dr. Gregory, Dr. Rutherford, Dr. Duncan, Dr. Hope, Mr. Hamilton, Dr. Home, Dr. Monro junior, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Russell, Professors.

The Right Honorable the Lord Provost, together with William Coulter, Archibald Campbell, John Turnbull, and James Goldie, Esquires, Bailies; Peter Hill, Esq. Treasurer; and John Young, Esq. Convener of the Trades, acting for themselves, and as representing also the other members of the Town-Council, Patrons of the University, accompanied by Mr. John Playfair and Mr. John Leslie, being introduced to the meeting, the Lord Provost delivered into the hands of the Principal, two

* See Short Statement, &c. p. 369 of this volume.

commissions, the one appointing Mr. John Playfair to be Professor of Natural Philosophy, in place of Dr. John Robison deceased, and the other appointing Mr. John Leslie, with Dr. Adam Ferguson, joint professors of mathematics, in consequence of the resignation of the said Dr. Ferguson and Mr. Playfair. Upon which Mr. Robert Sym, Notary-Public, stepped forward and read to the meeting the following protest—&c. &c. &c.

* * * * *

Before the Lord Provost and Magistrates left the room, Dr. Gregory begged leave to call the immediate attention of the *Senatus Academicus* to some recent occurrences, which he thought concerned very much the honor and interest of the University. He stated, That the proceedings of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, with respect to requiring the professors to subscribe the confession of faith, were mentioned in the common newspapers, a paragraph from one of which he read to the meeting; which paragraph, he conceived, brought the University before the public in a very unfavorable light, as it took notice only, that the Presbytery had required the professors to subscribe the confession of faith, and had received a long letter from the University, in which the professors agreed to come forward and do so; but did not state the full vindication of the conduct of the professors, which had been given by them in their answer to the Presbytery;—that the very unfavorable insinuation with respect to the religious principles of the Professors, by the request of the Presbytery being thus conveyed to the public, which would have been bad at all times, was made still worse, on this occasion, by being joined with the strong objections which certain members of the Presbytery had urged against Mr. Leslie, and which were fully detailed in the same newspapers;—that all this was made much worse by what he heard, from undoubted authority, had passed at the last meeting of the Presbytery, when the extract of the minute of the proceedings of the University, in answer to the Presbytery's letter, was read;—that the Presbytery had treated this answer with the greatest contempt, as improper, disrespectful to the Presbytery, such

a thing as they never would allow to be recorded in their minutes, but would keep *in retentis* as a literary curiosity;—that these things were said in the Presbytery, in presence of the Principal, and of the Professors of Divinity, of Oriental Languages, of Logic, and of Rhetoric and Belles Letters, and of a great number of our own students, and other persons, and were already become the subjects of common conversation all over the town;—that he knew that some printers were already endeavouring to procure a copy, or an account of that letter or minute of the University, in order to publish it in their newspapers; and that he had heard even that an attempt had been made to procure a copy of it to send to London for the same purpose; that therefore he apprehended some imperfect account or copy of that minute would soon appear in the newspapers, and probably be made the subject of very improper commentaries by malicious and profligate men, who would be glad to represent every thing in the manner most unfavorable both to the Presbytery and to the University;—that he trusted all his colleagues would agree with him in thinking that no consideration should ever induce the *Senatus Academicus* to engage in any altercation with the Reverend Presbytery, which could not fail to be disgraceful to themselves, and injurious to the interests of science, of virtue, and of religion;—but suggested, that for the *Senatus Academicus* silently to acquiesce in such reflections as had been thus publicly thrown upon them, would be to acknowledge that they were true and just, and to renounce all regard to their own character, and all pretensions to respectability and usefulness;—and, to prevent all these evils, and all farther mistakes and misrepresentations, he moved,—That the extract of the minutes of the *Senatus Academicus*, dated the 15th of March 1805, a copy of which extract was transmitted to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, be printed, without any commentary or addition, for the use of the members of the *Senatus Academicus;* and that the secretary of the University be directed to send, as soon as possible, a copy to the Right Honorable the Lord Provost, and copies to the Magistrates and mem-

bers of the Town-Council of Edinburgh, the Patrons of this University.

The *Senatus Academicus* UNANIMOUSLY approved of this motion made by Dr. Gregory; and authorized and directed the Secretary accordingly.

Extracted from the Record of the University of Edinburgh, on this and the four preceding pages, by

AND^W DALZEL, *Sec.*

AFTER these extracts from the records of the University, I leave, without any comment, to the consideration of my readers, the following sentence in the *Examination* of my Short Statement, lately published by *one of the Ministers of Edinburgh.*

"It is but an act of justice here to mention, that the members of Presbytery have ground to believe, that *the great body* of the *Senatus Academicus* were merely passive in regard to these charges, and are blameable only * for *incautiously* covering with their name, the intemperance of *a very few of their number.*" pp. 29, 30.

---

* The insinuation which is here conveyed, that, in the opinion of the reverend writer, a member of a public body may, without much blame, *acquiesce silently* in a unanimous resolution, which he is afterwards to reprobate; or even *preside silently* in the chair of a unanimous meeting, which he is afterwards to libel in the grossest and most injurious terms, suggested to me the possibility that Dr. Baird, although he sanctioned with his name the *Examination of my Statement*, might, on this occasion, have been only a *passive* member of the inquisitorial Decemvirate. I accordingly thought it an act of justice to afford him an opportunity of contradicting the following assertion of the Reverend *Examinator;* "That *all* the ministers of Edinburgh, who had objected to Mr. Leslie's appointment, are ready to answer for both the facts and the doctrine contained in this reply to Mr. Stewart."—My query was addressed to him (after a short preamble) in the following terms, and was put into his hands, by a friend of mine, on the 24th of December last.

"Are *you*, Sir, 'ready to answer for both the facts and the doctrine contained' in the pamphlet already referred to; or do you authorize me to contradict publicly the above assertion of the anonymous writer."

I subjoin the reply, which, after mature deliberation, Dr. Baird sent to my house next morning; and, I can, with great sincerity, say, I read it with those feelings of deep and painful concern, in which I am sure his best friends will be the first to participate.—How was it possible for Dr. Baird, if he ever read a single page of the performance in question, to put his name to the following declaration, drawn up in the form and with the solemnity of a creed!

"SIR, *24th December*, 1805.

"I BELIEVE the facts stated in the Pamphlet to which you allude in your letter of this date, to be true, and the doctrines it contains to be well founded. This BELIEF

The two following articles relate to two specific charges contained in the *Examination of my Short Statement*, to which I think it necessary to request the attention of those who may have honored that publication with a perusal. In the former charge, I alone am personally concerned: the latter seems to have been levelled more directly at my friend Mr. Leslie. For the exclusive notice which I thus bestow on these passages, my sole reason is, that I have not observed, through the whole of this performance, one other sentence, which seems to call for the slightest explanation on my part, in order to defend myself from the blame of *misrepresenting* facts; the only controversial point which I shall ever descend to argue with my Reverend Critics, till they shall have the candor to make a public acknowledgment, that when they attempted to intimidate the Magistrates of Edinburgh with their metaphysical *dogma*, they either acted *malâ fide*, or spoke on a subject which none of them understood.

Two other charges, indeed, of a more general nature, have been brought against my veracity, by the same gentlemen. 1. "That part of my argument is founded on a supposition, that, for some time past, there has existed, among a party of the Edinburgh Clergy, a *combination* for promoting as many as possible of their own number to Professorships in the University." (*Examination*, &c. p. 49.) 2. "That I have endeavoured to impress on the public mind, that the Ministers of Edinburgh who objected to Mr. Leslie were actuated by interested or unjustifiable motives." (p. 56.) On the first of these heads, it is said, that "the only reply that can be given is *an unqualified denial.* No such combination ever existed. The allusions to it are *false and groundless*," &c. &c. (p. 49.) As to the second, an apology is made for *prostituting the word* FACT, by applying it to such an imputation. (p. 56.)

I must continue to entertain, and will be, at all times, ready, when requisite, to avow, till farther information convinces me that I am mistaken.—I am,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) GEO. BAIRD."

"*Mr. Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy.*"

On neither of these subjects am I in the least afraid to submit the point which is at issue between the Ministers of Edinburgh and myself, to the judgment of my fellow citizens. The *truth* in both cases was so notorious, (as far as the motives of men can be inferred from their conduct,) that to offer any proof of it to those who have witnessed the history and politics of these gentlemen for a course of years past, would be as absurd in me, as it is unavailing for them to attempt to deny it. With readers "at a distance from the scene of the dispute," I would willingly hope, that *my* decided conviction, thus seriously and solemnly expressed, will weigh somewhat against *their* bare assertions; more particularly, as the detail of their opposition to Mr. Leslie (which is now pretty completely before the world), together with the general spirit of their late publication, affords a tolerable specimen of the *present leaders* of the MODERATE PARTY in our national church;—the men who affect to tread in the footsteps of Robertson, Blair, Campbell, and Gerard!—In the same point of view, the articles to which I am now to proceed will be found not unworthy of notice.

No. II.

"Among the other *facts* stated by Mr. Stewart, he has introduced some circumstances relative to the right of *avisamentum*, in the election of Professors, claimed by the Ministers of Edinburgh. And, under this head, he has betrayed a very strange tendency to incorrect statement, in a case where no mind could be supposed liable to any bias. 'It is proper,' says he, (p. 46.) 'to mention that *on the 27th of March (two days previous to the election)* a bill of suspension was presented to the Lord Ordinary,' &c. And, after narrating the interlocutor of the Lord Ordinary, he adds, (p. 47.) 'It was under the express sanction, therefore, of judicial authority, that the Magistrates determined to proceed in Mr. Leslie's election.'—How is it possible to avoid concluding, from this statement, that Mr. Leslie's elec-

tion as Professor of Mathematics actually took place at the time here alluded to, (the 29th of March.) Yet how is it possible to reconcile this *fact* with the assertion, (p. 40.) that 'the Magistrates were already assembled for the purpose of the election,' when the Ministers resolved to enter their protest, on the 12th March, or with the corresponding assertion, (p. 30.) that it was only 'a day or two before the time of his *actual election*,' that the Ministers discovered Mr. Leslie's dangerous doctrine! *Perhaps the reader may be of opinion that a writer, so very liable to err, in point of fact, ought not to be* implicitly *trusted in other cases, where it is more possible for his mind to be under the influence of prejudice."—Examination of Mr. Stewart's Pamphlet, &c.* pp. 70, 71.

I believe most of my readers will agree with me in thinking, that even if I *had* been guilty of the inaccuracy here laid to my charge, the oversight would have been venial in a pamphlet written and printed in the course of a few days; more especially as the point to which the supposed inaccuracy relates, has confessedly no connexion whatever with the question at issue. As I would not willingly, however, submit to the imputation of carelessness even in a trifle, (after the inference drawn from it so confidently against the general authenticity of my narrative,) I am happy to find, that, in this instance, the charge of *misrepresentation* must fall elsewhere. That the misrepresentation was *gross*, the following documents will show; after a perusal of which, I leave my readers to judge how far it was *intentional.*

In order to explain some circumstances in the following letter, it is necessary to premise, that the dates in my *Statement*, objected to in the foregoing quotation, were copied from a *memorial*, drawn up by one of the learned *Assessors* of this city, as Counsel for the Lord Provost and Magistrates, against a Committee of the Ministers of Edinburgh, in the civil question about the alleged right of *avisamentum* in the election of a Professor of Mathematics.* At the moment when the

* This Memorial has been since printed.

Examination of my Pamphlet appeared, Mr. Ferguson (the writer of the memorial in question) was in the country; * but as soon as I heard of his arrival in town, I requested of him to take the trouble of examining the City Records, in order to ascertain whether any mistake, in point of date, with respect to Mr. Leslie's election, had been committed either by himself or by me. I subjoin his answer at length; for the minuteness and accuracy of which, in the midst of his numerous and more important occupations, I beg leave to return him my best thanks.—For the information of readers "at a distance from the scene of the dispute," such a detail was rendered absolutely necessary by the passage quoted above. To the inhabitants of this city, (where it is *universally known* that Mr. Leslie was in fact elected *twice,)* it would have been altogether superfluous; and to none of these inhabitants *more* superfluous, than to the Reverend Gentlemen who gave occasion to the *second* election, by their cavils † about the regularity of the *first.*

"MY DEAR SIR,

"IN answer to your inquiry respecting the grounds of a statement in the printed memorial, drawn by me for the Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh, in their question with a Committee of the Ministers of this City, relative to the right of *avisamentum* in the election of a Professor of Mathematics, by adopting which, you are accused of having fallen into an error in point of fact, I am happy to be enabled to give you what I apprehend to be a most complete and satisfactory explanation.

"The passage alluded to I presume is that on the 23d page of my memorial, in these terms:—'Upon the

* I mention this circumstance, because it prevented the foregoing Postscript, (which was sent to the press on the 28th December) from appearing so early as I at first intended. The delay, which has since taken place, has been chiefly owing to the indispensable engagements of my Printer during the sitting of the Court of Sessions.

† I use the word *cavil*, not because I think the first election was strictly regular, but because the very same informality had passed without the slightest objection from any of Mr. Leslie's opponents, in the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Moodie (one of their own number) as Professor of Oriental Languages.

day (12th March, 1805) when the Magistrates, in Council, were proceeding to consider of the evidence laid before them, in favor of the candidates for the election, the suspenders not only attended and lodged their representation and protest, as stated in the bill of suspension, but Dr. Greive, the Præses of the Committee, stated all the grounds of objection entertained by the majority of the Ministers of Edinburgh, in a long speech, addressed to the whole of the memorialists. He was followed by Dr. Inglis, likewise in a speech of considerable length. The memorialists heard these gentlemen fairly out; and the Lord Provost, from the chair, then desired that two letters of Mr. Leslie, to the Reverend Professor of Divinity, and to the Dean of Guild of the City, on the subject of the objection in the Suspenders' protest, might be read, with the certificates and other documents produced for the candidates, to the Suspenders, and that they would state their opinions after hearing these. This the Suspenders declined, (as they said,) because their constituents had given them no authority to consider these documents and letters, or to make any reply; and consequently they withdrew without hearing the contents of these documents; with the first mentioned of which, however, it now appears that they were previously acquainted, and also with the fact, that it had completely satisfied the Reverend Professor of Divinity.

"'After the Ministers had thus withdrawn, leaving their *avisamentum* behind them, the memorialists having duly and fully considered it, proceeded to make their election, which they did not complete, as the dates of the protest and election show, for above a week afterwards.'

"In this part of my paper, I pleaded that the right of *avisamentum*, if possessed by the Ministers of Edinburgh, had been exercised in the case under discussion; and for that argument I had no occasion to give a detailed statement of procedure in the election of Mr. Leslie. But in the narrative at the outset of the same paper, (page 4.), I had quoted the act of election, on the 29th of March, with the date. *Had it been necessary to do*

so, I would likewise have minutely stated how the Patrons did then proceed to elect a new Professor for the Mathematical Chair, on the 12th of March, in consequence of a letter of resignation from Mr. Playfair, who had held the appointment jointly with Professor Adam Ferguson, and had been the sole acting Professor, in virtue of that appointment. In truth, they did then, as they conceived, complete that election; but afterwards saw, that, in point of form, a resignation by the *Emeritus* Professor under the former appointment was likewise requisite; and having received a letter of resignation from Professor Ferguson likewise, again elected Mr. Leslie *de novo* joint Professor with Mr. Ferguson on the 29th of March. *Every part of this procedure was notorious, and stood engrossed in the records of the City;* and I therefore inserted no more of it in my narrative than was relevant to the argument to follow. I now transcribe the procedure, as it will be found in the Record of the Council, in the volume commencing upon the 13th of February, 1805.

"The minute relative to the election of a Professor of Mathematics on the 12th of March 1805, commences thus: 'Compeared Dr. Henry Greive, one of the Ministers of the Old Church, and Dr. John Inglis, one of the Ministers of the Old Greyfriars Church, each of whom made a long speech relative to the election of a Professor of Mathematics, containing in substance what is contained in the paper after inserted. Thereafter Mr. Inglis read a paper, which he craved might be inserted in the minutes of Council, which was agreed to; and it is of the following tenor,' &c. &c.

"The Representation and Protest follow, as engrossed, and you will notice that the pamphlet which accuses you of misrepresentation, does explicitly state, at page 66, that 'the first and only scroll of the remonstrance was in consequence presented by the Committee, and as they were most readily allowed to have it afterwards copied under their own eye, they had no disposition to complain.'

"Immediately after the copy of the Representation and Protest, the same minute in the record proceeds:

'*A Member of Council asked, if, at the Meeting of the Ministers of Edinburgh, they had under their consideration a letter from Mr. John Leslie to the Reverend Dr. Andrew Hunter? and was answered by Dr. Greive, that they had, but that such letter did not any wise alter their opinion.** The Ministers having retired, a copy of Mr. Leslie's letter to the Dean of Guild was produced and read, of the following tenor.' This letter is then engrossed also. You will attend to what immediately follows the copy of this letter, in the record of the procedure on the 12th of March: 'all which, with the strong certificates produced to the

---

* I must entreat here the attention of my Readers to pp. 67, 68, 69, of the *Examination of my Pamphlet.* The following is a short extract from the passage which I refer to.

"If the reader has really felt *with* Mr. Stewart, and *for* Mr. Leslie, on account of the hardship he might have sustained, in consequence of 'no intimation being given that such a letter existed,' he will perhaps be equally relieved and surprised, upon being informed, *that the letter actually was one of the subjects of conference between the Town Council and the Committee of Ministers at the Council Board.* The written remonstrance was no sooner read, than the Lord Provost introduced the subject of the letter.

"If Mr. Stewart's curiosity next prompt him to inquire, whether this subject, if not so immediately introduced by the Lord Provost, would have occurred to any of the Committee of Ministers, he can have little ground to expect that his curiosity should be gratified; for the members of that Committee can scarce be supposed capable of saying what would or would not have occurred to them, if the conversation had taken a different turn."

To enable the reader to form a still more adequate judgment on this *conference* between the Committee of Ministers and the Magistrates of Edinburgh, on the subject of Mr. Leslie's letter to Dr. Hunter, it may be necessary to explain in what manner the existence of this letter came to be so early known to the Members of the Town Council. The truth is, that when Mr. Leslie communicated to me in the the morning of March 12, the letter which he had written to Dr. Hunter, and when I found that this gentleman (who was prevented by indisposition from attending in person the meeting of his Brethren) had transmitted it under cover to Dr. Greive, it occurred to me, as a precaution that might not be altogether useless to Mr. Leslie, to send a copy to one of his friends in the Magistracy; and I accordingly urged him to do so without a moment's delay. The circumstances of the *conference* which took place in the Council Chamber about two hours afterwards, sufficiently confirmed my suspicions that there was at least a *possibility*, that the original might *not* reach the Patrons of the University through the medium of Dr. Greive.

In case this Postscript should fall into the hands of any person who has not read Mr. Leslie's letter to Dr. Hunter, I shall take this opportunity of referring him to page 36 of my *Short Statement*, 3d edition. After having perused the letter, I beg leave to recommend to his serious consideration the following sentences from the late publication of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

"It is well known that, from the moment of receiving the letter, they were of one mind in considering it as, in some respects, an *aggravation* of his original offence. And, though the charge of suppressing it, or not discussing its merits in the written remonstrance, might be pretty satisfactorily obviated by reminding the reader, that not more than an hour and a half elapsed, from the time when the letter was received, till the remonstrance was actually presented, *the Ministers have too much sense of honor* to plead this circumstance as an apology for not having done—what would never have occurred to them to be necessary as an act of justice to Mr. Leslie."

Council of the abilities and good character of Mr. Leslie, being maturely considered, they resolved immediately to proceed to the election of a Professor of Mathematics, in the room of Mr. Playfair, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh; and there was produced and read a letter from Mr. John Playfair, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, containing a resignation of the office of joint Professor of Mathematics, along with Professor Ferguson, which is, of the following tenor.' "Having been appointed by you Professor of Natural Philosophy in the College of Edinburgh, I do resign into your hands my office of Professor of Mathematics in the said College, which I held jointly with Professor Adam Ferguson; and I am," &c.

"'Thereafter the Magistrates and Council, considering that their predecessors in office, by their Act of Council, dated the 18th May, 1785, did elect, nominate, and appoint, Mr. Adam Ferguson and Mr. John Playfair, jointly, and the longest liver of them, to be Professors of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, and that *ad vitam aut culpam*, giving, granting, and disponing to them, and to the survivor of them, during their or his enjoying the said office, the salary annexed thereto,' &c. &c. * * * * * *

"'And considering that the office of joint Professor of Mathematics is now vacant by the resignation of Professor Playfair, and that it is expedient to supply the vacancy with a well-qualified person; and being fully satisfied with the abilities and good qualifications of Mr. John Leslie, author of "An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat," and other publications, the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council, Ordinary and Extraordinary, *nemine contradicente*, elected, nominated, and appointed him joint Professor of Mathematics, along with Professor Ferguson, *ad vitam aut culpam*, during the life of Professor Playfair, in the room of, and upon the same terms and conditions, and in the same way and manner as enjoyed by the said Professor Playfair, with the benefit of survivorship, in the event of Professor Ferguson's predeceasing Professor John Playfair.'

"So thoroughly did the Patrons regard the election as then completed, that, on the 20th of the same month, in a minute relative to the engrossing the evidence which the Council possessed of Mr. Leslie's 'talents, scientific knowledge, moral character, and principles, and his qualifications for the office of Professor of Mathematics,' (which is there appointed to be put upon record, 'in justice to the character of *Professor Leslie*, as well as in justice to the unbiassed conduct of the Council,') they begin with mentioning the attack in the Representation and Protest upon record, on the character of Mr. Leslie, 'whom the *Council had elected joint Professor of Mathematics*, along with Professor Ferguson.' And to the close of this minute, of the 20th March, the language of the Record assumes the election to have been made upon the 12th of that month.

"On the 29th of March, the error, in point of form of proceeding to a new election, upon the resignation of the acting Professor only, is corrected by another minute in the Record, which states, that the Meeting 'read a letter from Professor Adam Ferguson, resigning his office of joint Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, which was accepted of; and in terms thereof, and a former resignation by Professor Playfair, declared the said office vacant. And thereafter, the Council considering, that the office of Professor of Mathematics in the University of this City is at present vacant, by the resignation of the saids Professor Adam Ferguson and Professor John Playfair, late Professors thereof; and that it is incumbent on the Council, as patrons of the University, to supply the vacancy with a well-qualified person or persons; and being fully satisfied with the abilities and good qualifications of the said Professor Adam Ferguson, and of Mr. John Leslie, author of 'An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat,' and other publications, for discharging the duty of that important office; the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council, with the Extraordinary Deacons, unanimously elected, nominated, and appointed the saids Professor Adam Ferguson and Mr. John Leslie jointly, and the longest liver of

them, to be Professors of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, and that *ad vitam aut culpam.*'

"When I drew my paper originally in the form of Answers to the Bill of Suspension, which were lodged on the 27th of April, I had not the record before me; and the only error which appears to have existed in my information, upon a comparison of the statements in it with the record, consists in my having said, that the Lord Provost desired the letter of Mr. Leslie to Dr. Hunter to be read in the course of the procedure on the 12th of March.

"It appears, on the contrary, from the record, that the Members of the Committee of Ministers were applied to for information with respect to this letter. Had the record been before me when I wrote the paper, I would have so stated the fact. I cannot now discover how I collected this part of my statement, and whether from verbal or written communications to me, as I have not preserved any notes used in the composition of it.

"*I must regret that so much trouble should have been given, to explain to the world the grounds of a statement in point of fact, as to which it is beyond the reach of my imagination to conjecture how there should ever have been a misconception in the mind of any party interested in the procedure, and attending to it when it took place. The Representation and Protest of the Committee of the Ministers of Edinburgh, you have seen, was laid before the Council, and enforced by speeches, when they actually were met to proceed to the election of the 12th March. An election then took place. But because an additional resignation was found requisite in point of form, to render the new appointment regular, this election was repeated on the 29th of March, when that defect of form was supplied. Consequently, the statement of my paper, which you have adopted as to the procedure on the 12th of March, was perfectly correct; and there can be no difficulty in judging whether the after procedure on the 29th of that month really was inconsistent with that statement.*

"I am, my Dear Sir, with sincere regard, your most faithful and obedient humble servant,

JA. FERGUSSON.

Hill Street, Jan. 5, 1806.
Dugald Stewart, Esq.

"P. S. Conceiving it to be but the common duty of one gentleman to another to explain the grounds of any statement in point of fact, which has led to error or controversy, I leave you at liberty to use this letter in any manner you think proper.

J. F."

No. III.

"In a note with which Mr. Stewart has enriched the *third* edition of his pamplet (p. 108, &c.) he seems delighted with a discovery which he has made, that another author, (the late *Dr. Hunter*, a Presbyterian clergyman in London) had, in common with Mr. Leslie, expressed a profound admiration of Mr. Hume's *Essay on Necessary Connexion.* Mr. Stewart refers his readers to some strong expressions of this admiration, in a note subjoined to *Euler's Letters to a German Princess;* and, after balancing the claims of the French and the English Editor to the honor of the note in question, he assigns the palm of victory to Dr. Hunter, the English editor.—Will it, after all, be *believed*, that the author of the note alluded to is neither the French nor the English editor, but *Mr. Leslie himself!* Inquiry, at any rate, will soon *convince* those who may desire to ascertain the fact. For, however zealous *Mr. Stewart* appears to have been to find an associate for his friend in his admiration of Mr. Hume's Essay, Mr. Leslie has been heard to disavow the associate, and to acknowledge that he himself wrote the note to which Mr. Stewart has referred."

The first knowledge I had of the existence of the note quoted from Dr. Hunter's translation of Euler, was conveyed to me in an anonymous letter, the very day before the discussion of Mr. Leslie's cause in the General Assembly. Of this letter I communicated the contents to my friend the Rev. Dr. Hunter, Professor of Divinity;

who accordingly mentioned the note in his speech from the bar. I afterwards introduced the same quotation, with some remarks of my own, in the third Edition of my *Short Statement;* * and I am convinced, that every man of common candor, who takes the trouble to read these remarks with the slightest attention, will agree with me in thinking, that the argument they contain, far from being destroyed, is infinitely strengthened, by the criticisms to which it lately has given occasion.

During the proceedings relative to Mr. Leslie, before the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, that gentleman was in London, where he remained for several months afterwards; and so little did either he or I occupy ourselves about his antagonists in Edinburgh, that not a single letter passed between us from the day he left Scotland till his return. It was not till the month of October, that I heard, very accidentally, that Mr. Leslie was himself the friend, to whom Dr. Henry Hunter has alluded in his preface, as the author of some of the Philosophical and Mathematical Annotations subscribed with the initials E. E. (English Editor;) and that, in fact, the passage which I had quoted in his favor, was his own composition. In remarking this curious and fortunate coincidence, Mr. Leslie could not fail to perceive the triumphant reply which it enabled him to make to his accusers; for the very first sentence asserts, that "*the properties of matter must ultimately be referred to the arbitrary appointment of the Author of Nature;*"—not to mention, that to have written the note under the eye of Dr. Hunter, and with his express sanction and approbation, was of itself no slight testimony to the soundness of his doctrine. His Reverend Adversaries, however, wisely suppressing any intimation of what is expressed in *this* part of the note, now exultingly ask, "Will it after all be believed, that the author of the note alluded to, is neither the French nor the English Editor, but *Mr. Leslie himself!* Inquiry, at any rate, will soon *convince* those who may desire to ascertain the fact."

On the subject of this note I have only to regret, that

* See pp. 108, 109, 110.

I was ignorant of the fact stated in the foregoing passage, while the cause was in dependence before the Ecclesiastical Court. I can hardly bring myself to believe, that the most intrepid of these ten gentlemen would have presumed to deny, that this short and simple proposition, "The properties of matter must ultimately be referred to the arbitrary appointment of the Author of Nature," expresses a conviction of the Being of God, in somewhat less ambiguous terms, than if he had subscribed their never-to-be-forgotten *dogma*, That THERE EXISTS SUCH A NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN CAUSE AND EFFECT AS IMPLIES AN OPERATING PRINCIPLE IN THE CAUSE.

By way of counterpart to this coincidence, which has been contemplated with so much self-congratulation by the Decemvirate, as an additional and unlooked-for argument in proof of Mr. Leslie's atheism, I shall take this opportunity of presenting to them another, no less curious and important; a coincidence which will give pleasure to every person who has *sincerely* at heart those great interests, which persecution abandons and disgraces, whenever she *professes* to defend them.

There is, at this moment, lying before me, an original letter from Mr. Dempster of Dunnichen, to a correspondent in Edinburgh; which letter appears evidently, from the contents, to have been written with a view to publication at the opening of the present session of the College, in consequence of the calumnies which Mr. Leslie's enemies were then circulating, with more (if possible) than their ordinary assiduity. The name of MR. GEORGE DEMPSTER, I am inclined to think, will have fully as great weight, *at a distance from the scene of the dispute*, as that of any one of the ten Reverend Authors, who have now, for the first time, stepped forth as candidates for literary distinction. For my own part, I have not the honor to be personally known to him; but I have had good access to be acquainted with the warmth and steadiness of his attachment to Mr. Leslie; and I know, in common with the rest of his countrymen, that his friendship is the boast of all who have the happiness to possess it.—Mr. Dempster's letter (from which

I am now to quote a short extract) is dated 4th November, 1805.

"I should be wanting to the cause of learning and science, and to the University where I studied, were I to withhold from the public a circumstance, which will prove, beyond all doubt, that the sentiments of our second Maclaurin with respect to the Deity are to the full as pious and becoming as those of his illustrious predecessor, or even of the immortal Newton himself.

"It is now above a twelvemonth, and some time before the Mathematical chair became vacant, that Mr. Leslie did me the favor to communicate to me a manuscript Essay of his, on the subject of Electricity, bearing date 15th February, 1796, from which the following is an extract.

"'Some indeed are unwilling to admit the probability of *action* at a *distance*, and like the poor Indian, who placed the world on the back of a tortoise, they have recourse to some intervening medium. But is it more difficult to conceive an effect at the distance of 1000 miles, or at the $\frac{1}{1000}$ part of an inch? *Or have we ever any idea of the connexion between Cause and Effect, but that of* CONSTANT CONCOMITANCY? The various hypotheses which have amused the philosophic world, derive their origin from the early and inveterate prejudice, that all motion is caused by impulse. Vortices and Æther enjoyed only a temporary reputation: and every sober inquirer was convinced, that such gratuitous assumptions, instead of simplifying the laws of nature, involved them in greater obscurity and perplexity. The question still recurred, What produced the motions of those elements? The understanding, bewildered and confounded amid the increasing difficulties, abandoned the pursuit. The imagination alone was delighted to dwell in mystery and illusive darkness. *The chain of principles which govern this universe terminates in the* WILL *of its* ALMIGHTY ARCHITECT: and prudence calls us to stop where the link appears simplest, and not to strain beyond the limits of our faculties.'"

NOTE.—See p. 379, line 4.

In order to prevent the possibility of any uncandid misconstruction of my meaning, I think it proper to state explicitly, that I employ the phrase *Ecclesiastical Junto* in this sentence merely as descriptive of a small class of individuals, who, by blending the politics of *a party* in the Church with the Academical concerns of the University, have wounded deeply the reputation and the peace of a learned body, to the prosperity of which the union and harmony of its members are scarcely less essential than their learning and talents.

What two individuals ever differed more widely, or more conscientiously, in many of their opinions concerning ecclesiastical policy, than our late Principal, Dr. Robertson, and our present learned and worthy Professor of Divinity? And yet how anxiously was this difference kept out of view within the walls of the University; and with what cordial zeal did they cooperate in every measure tending to advance its interests and honor?

"*Fuit hæc sapientia* QUONDAM,
Publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis."

END OF VOLUME VII.

3 1144 00200022 1

192 7820
S849A
vol.7 Stewart, Dugald.
The works of Dugald
Stewart.

7820
192
S849A
vol.7 Stewart, Dugald.
The works of Dugald
Stewart.

WITHDRAWN

DREW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
MADISON, NEW JERSEY 07940